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PREFACE

Out of the large amount of sermon-material which my father left behind him, it has been thought advisable to publish another volume of his Parochial Sermons.

My father was presented to Brighstone Rectory in December, 1866, and resigned it on being consecrated Bishop of Salisbury, in October, 1869. It was the only parochial charge he ever held; and these three years were naturally more prolific in sermons than any previous or subsequent years. Within them were written all the sermons contained in the volume entitled "Brighstone Sermons," or (in the second edition) "Plain Sermons, preached at

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Brighstone," and almost all those in the present volume of "Parochial Sermons"—so called to distinguish them from his former Winchester College Sermons, and his later Salisbury Cathedral Sermons.

But not all of these were preached in Brighstone Church. During the same three years he was made Canon of Chester, and kept one residence there, in the winter of 1868 and the spring of 1869; and three sermons, not differing in general tone from the rest, but preached in Chester Cathedral (Nos. III., V., VII.), will be found in the present volume. There are also to be found in this volume three, the insertion of which is not strictly justified by its title, but which I have included because of the singular beauty of the thoughts contained in them, and which certainly are not excluded by any difference of style; No. XXV., preached in the College Chapel at Winchester, and

Nos. XII. and XX., in the Cathedral at Salisbury.

The order of the sermons in the volume follows, generally, the time of year at which they were delivered.

I have left nearly all their *local colouring*, so to call it, about the sermons: partly from reluctance to omit anything beyond what was necessary in the work of one that is gone from us; and partly from the conviction, which I know that my father would have shared, that these local touches were the things that imparted the most vivid interest to the sermons at the time, and so serve best to individualize them still.

In short, all through the work—a work which has been truly a labour of love to me—I have striven to be guided by nothing so much as what I have thought would have been his

judgment. May the volume be as useful to the interests of the English-speaking Church all over the world, as I have reason to hope the previous volume has already proved! To secure such an end I am sure that he would willingly have contributed by any means in his power.

G. H. MOBERLY.

LEAMINGTON, 1886.

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The Night is Far Spent, the Day is at Hand

ROMANS XIII.

11. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*
12. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

THE year is bringing us round again, brethren, to Advent; and the services of this day are, as it were, the first faint streak of light in the east betokening the annual rising of the Sun of Righteousness in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas Day. Thus every year we act, so to speak, as in a parable the great work which some day will actually take place upon the earth, when the Lord Himself—long looked for, for Whose coming the whole world waits—shall appear in the heavens, with all His holy Angels with Him, and shall sit upon the throne of His glory to judge both the quick and the dead.

The two verses of the text are very full of im-

portant matter. We are to *know the time,* or, as the phrase more properly means, we are to *recognize the critical moment,* to *seize the opportunity;* then, it is the critical moment for waking up out of sleep, and by sleep is meant that spiritual drowsiness which is so apt to come upon us all while things go on in their usual course round about us; then, the special reason for waking up just now is that "*our salvation is nearer than it was when we first became believers.*" Very full, I say, of high Christian matter this first verse is. See how the Apostle called to the Romans, and how he now calls to us every year at Advent. "Sleepers," he says, "awake. Throw off your heavy slumbers. It is long since you first believed and were made members of Christ; the day of salvation is coming nearer. It is much nearer than it was then. This is a critical moment for you. I beg you to recognize it, and not let it pass by without shaking off your spiritual sleep."

And then he goes on to the next verse. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; life is passing away, death is coming; this world is passing away, the next world is coming. It is dark now, and you are full of sleep, but the dawn will suddenly and soon begin to appear in the eastern sky; let us, therefore, recognize the critical moment, and, while

we have time, throw off by repentance and confession the various evil deeds we have done; let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light; let us clothe ourselves in the righteousness which God will give us in answer to our watchful prayers, and get ready, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the great change that will come to us all when the Eternal Morning breaks upon us."

Now, without taking each of these points separately, and dwelling upon them one by one, see, brethren, what on the whole is the view which they present to us: a night-time; we are in the midst of a night-time. We are asleep; but the night is well-nigh gone. There is a great daybreak coming, and it is very near at hand.

A word, then, on these things.

It is night-time. How strange it sounds, brethren, to be told that life is night-time, and that death brings daylight! What a strange overthrowing this is of our common ideas! Which of us does not think exactly the opposite to this? While we are alive, and walk upon the earth, and see the daylight in the sky, from sunrise to full noon, from noon to twilight, and then, after a few hours of rest, and darkness which brings rest, look to see the sun rise again in the east, and day after day see it rise un-

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failingly,—which of us does not think that *this* is the *daytime;* that these days in which we are busy in our work, and in our families, these days in which we grow up and grow old, and see our children grow up round about us,—that *these* constitute the daytime, the sunshine, the bright time of our existence? In like manner, when we think of the grave; when we are called upon to lay those we love in the consecrated earth; when we are brought nearer and nearer by old age or sickness to our own graves; when the shadows deepen upon us, and all looks as if the twilight were about to give place to total darkness;—which of us, I say, does not feel as if the *daytime* were departing with this life, and the *night-time* were coming when this life is past?

So it is to our natural sight; so it is as far as our natural eyes can see, and our own natural powers, unassisted by the light of the Word of God, can judge. But it is a grave mistake. This is the dark time; that is the light time. This, bright as it seems to us, bright as it seems to many of us, and sometimes—for even we feel it to be very dark and sad now and then, when heavy blows of sorrow and distress fall upon us—this, bright as it often seems, is really, in comparison with that which is beyond, darkness, shadow, gloom, night.

And there—there where our Christian dead are gone; there where we, if we die in Christ, shall go too,—there is the real brightness, the real sunshine, the real daylight. The Word of God tells us so. The faithful in all the world entirely believe it to be so. This it is which cheers them when death, and the thought of death, come close to them. No doubt this life has some brightness. But it is as nothing in comparison of that. This is a dim, a checkered, a hazy, uncertain sort of brightness, a brightness sufficient for us to work in; but that is indescribably bright. There is no haze, nor uncertainty, nor dimness, nor night there. "They need no candle, nor light of the sun, nor of the moon to shine upon it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Now, it is a great thing for people to learn by degrees to understand this. A man who has thought enough about it, and accustomed himself to feel and know that this life is only a very dim and dark twilight, compared with the divine brightness that follows after death to him who dies in the faith and fear of God, has made a good step towards overcoming the fear, the naturally distressing fear, of death. If we could bring our minds to think of the unspeakable happiness—the Presence of God, the meeting with

the dear friends who have been called away before us, the bright joys that come with faithful death,—we should have made, as I say, a great step towards weaning ourselves from that clinging love of this world and the things that belong to this world, which takes so close and tight hold of our minds, and makes the prospect of dying so dark and terrible to us.

But, in the next place, the Apostle tells us that we are asleep. How? Are we indeed asleep? are we asleep about our business? are we asleep about our interests? Asleep! Is not the whole country at this moment in a fever of excitement about public affairs? How can we be said to be asleep? Alas! it is very possible to be very wide awake to some things, and dead asleep to others. Indeed, the wider we are awake, and the more lively our excitement about some things, so much the deeper, sometimes, is apt to be our sleep about other things. Everybody sees it, and knows it. Spiritual sleep lies heavy upon many a soul that is very active and awake, indeed, about earthly things; and spiritual wakefulness, though it by no means involves inactivity in worldly things, is very far from being the same thing as such activity. People must have some real ideas as to the comparative brightness of this life and that one, before they are likely to find out how sleepy they

are in spiritual things, and how much need they have to keep themselves constantly awake. I suppose we are all much too full of sleep. It creeps over us so unawares. Other people seem hardly more awake than we are. Things seem to go on so much as usual—so much as if they would always go on as they have done. We are so busy with our earthly dreaming, we hardly know how very much asleep we are. Oh, brethren, if the trumpet of God were suddenly to sound in our ears, and the bright breaking of the Eternal Morning to shine through these windows, can you not fancy in some degree what a tremendous waking it would be? Can you not think how the cares of this life, which we are so busy with now, would all be thrown away as quickly as a morning dream when one awaketh? Just proportionate to that startled waking is the deepness of our present sleep. May God give us all grace to shake it off; and, having shaken it off once, to watch against it, and keep it off; lest, like the unready virgins in the parable, the Lord come when we are not prepared—when we have fallen deep asleep upon our sacred watch.

And this night is far spent. It draws towards the dawn. Year after year the signs multiply of the approaching end. Wars and rumours of wars, men's

hearts failing them for fear, earthquakes, floods, famines in divers places. These are like the minute-guns in the night, warning us that it passes away fast. Who is watching best? "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night." Surely the morning is drawing near, and the distresses and anxieties of nations are the very signs that are appointed in order to keep us on the watch.

Meanwhile, if the world is thus growing on towards the great dawn, how is it with each separate one of us? Our time will not wait, it is probable, till then; but we—one by one, now an old one, now a young one, now one whose end comes in the usual course of things, in age and sickness; now it may be one in the midst of active health and strength—shall be called from this dim daylight to face the Eternal Morning.

Let us, then, says the Apostle, having in view this wonderful awaking, which sooner or later we shall all meet—let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. The works of darkness are sins, the armour of light is holiness in the Lord. He bids us repent—repent of our sins past, and turn to a holier, more faithful, more Christian life while we have yet time, and our night is not yet wholly past by.

My brethren, I tell you things which you yourselves know, which you could as well tell me. It is not to give you information that I speak; it is that we may help one another, if it be God's will, in awaking all together; for, believe me, we all need it. And is there not cause?

Have we not works of darkness—sins to cast off? If each one of us would look narrowly into his own heart as God looks into it, would he not find plenty of things to cast off and repent of? would he not find that every day he lives he has great reason to humble himself before God for thoughts, often for words, many times for deeds, which, if God were extreme to mark what is done amiss, must needs be his ruin?

People seem to feel these things very little. Of course, we cannot tell with any certainty what they really feel, and how far they really search their consciences before God, and lay open their sins with faithful confession,—none can know this with any certainty except themselves and the All-seeing Spirit of the Most High God; but, so far as we can see and judge, the consciousness of sin does seem to be very little awakened among men and women. Notorious sins are obviously thought very little of. Other ways of reaching heaven, besides repentance and sober

faith, are dreamed of. Believe me, we do greatly, greatly need to awake; and, awaking, to cast off the secret works of darkness, the various and often very insidious sorts of sin, which do most easily and dangerously beset us. And this is to be done, not by foolish excitement, but by sober earnestness; not in the way of this or that enthusiastic teacher, but in St. Paul's way, in the old way, in Christ's way, in the Holy Spirit's deep way; that is, by earnest, serious repentance and confession before God.

And let us put on the armour of light. Observe, brethren, you must cast off the sinful attire before you can put on the glorious attire. You cannot put on the armour of light over foul acts, bad words, sinful thoughts, unrepented and unconfessed. No; cast off the one before you put on the other. You cannot wear them both. You *must* begin with repentance. Let no man deceive himself. You *must* begin with repentance.

These thoughts, brethren, belong to this Advent season; and I know not why it is that year after year they seem to come to one's mind with deeper solemnity and more touching force. Perhaps it is the natural effect of growing older. Certainly every year fresh instances crowd upon our memory, of sorrow, sickness, death; of all these things, naturally

so sad and dark, which afflict our mortal life—things which at last Advent we could not have foreseen, but which no Advent fails, in some form or other, to bring.

But, *for all that*, Advent is a blessed season. For while it makes us turn our eyes sadly back upon the past, it opens them to the glorious future. It is *the* time of all the year which warns us that the night-time is passing; that it is far spent—farther spent every year; and that the glorious dawning of the day of God is at hand—nearer at hand every year; and that this dawning shall be to us, even though we pass through the gate and shadow of death to reach it, glory, honour, and immortality; provided that we wake up in time, and, casting off by true repentance the works of darkness, put on by the Holy Spirit of God, while we still have time, the blessed armour of light.

Elijah, the Warner of the Second Advent of the Lord

St. Matthew xi.

10. *This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

I SPOKE to you this morning, brethren, on the subject of the Clergy, explaining why they are called by St. Paul and in the Prayer-book "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" and I asked the help and prayers of the people, who, in their place and degree, share somewhat of the same responsibility which lies upon them in the first place.

I do not wish to say more upon that part of the subject; but to pass to another part of it, to which we are also strongly led by the services for the Third Sunday in Advent.

You know, I dare to say, that the Old Testament ends with a signal prophecy. Turn to the very last two verses of the very last book of the Old Testament,

the Book of the Prophet Malachi, and you will read these words, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

These are the two last verses of the Old Testament, and they, you see, predict that Elijah the prophet should come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

About four hundred years passed away, and there was no further prophet in Israel. And then, when the fulness of the time was come, and all the conditions foretold by the ancient prophets were complied with, came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Was John the Baptist Elijah? I dare to answer, No. For when he himself was asked by the messengers of the Sanhedrim, "Art thou Elias?" he said, "I am not."

But we must look carefully into the Holy Scripture to see precisely what is told to us on this point. You will remember that when the Angel Gabriel was sent to announce to Zacharias the priest the birth of his

son, he said to him, "He shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." So that we may conclude so far that, though he was not Elijah, yet he came in Elijah's spirit, and he came in Elijah's power, and he came to do the very things which Elijah was to do—prepare the way of the Lord by turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

But there are several other passages in which our Lord in the Gospels speaks of John the Baptist in this respect. For instance, in the eleventh of St. Matthew, after speaking very highly of his greatness—"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist,"—He goes on to say, "And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."

Very remarkable words these: "If ye are willing to receive it." I suppose we must understand them to signify, first, that John the Baptist was not actually Elijah, but that they might regard him as *partially* fulfilling, not as wholly fulfilling, the prophecy which said that Elijah should come. "If ye are willing to receive it"—plainly these words show that it was

possible to deny it; but if ye are willing, as ye ought to be, to recognize the partial fulfilment of prophecy, which is not less real because it is only partial—"if" thus "ye are willing to receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Taking, then, this Scripture for our guide, we learn how to interpret the Lord's words in the seventeenth of St. Matthew, "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed," when the "disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist." We know that Elias was come, not personally, but, if I may express myself so, representatively; not actually come back himself, but that another was come, in the same spirit and power which he had; to do before the first coming of the Lord that same work which Elias was to do before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Now, putting all these passages of Holy Scripture together, we conclude that the prophecy of Malachi, which shuts up the Old Testament, of the coming of Elijah, has been hitherto only partially fulfilled. John Baptist has come in his spirit and power; but he himself has not come. John Baptist has been like him—so like him that, if we are willing to receive it, we may regard him as fulfilling the prophecy; but yet not the same as he.

If the prophecy of Malachi, therefore, is to be understood to be *not literal,* nor exact, it has been fulfilled; if it is to be understood as literal, as exactly meaning what it plainly says, then it has not yet been fulfilled. There has been a likeness, a shadow of fulfilment, a partial fulfilment; but the full, perfect, literal fulfilment has not yet taken place.

Are we, then, to look forward to the actual and literal fulfilment? Are we to expect that Elijah himself—the prophet who spake to King Ahab, the prophet who ascended to the heavens in a chariot of fire, the prophet who never died as other men died, the prophet who appeared in glory with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, and conversed with the Lord respecting His approaching Death,—is to come back with his glorified body upon the earth, and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord?

Brethren, I would not speak with any positiveness on a matter of this kind; but I will own that I so read the prophecy. I believe that it will have a literal fulfilment. I do not know. I dare not so affirm. But so it seems to me. And not only because of the very precise and clear words of Malachi, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming

of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," but because the Lord Himself, as you read in the seventeenth of St. Matthew, when asked why the scribes said that Elias must first come, answered and said unto them, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." And though He goes on to say immediately that Elias is come already, yet, when all the passages are put together, it would seem as if we ought to interpret His words thus—

"Elijah shall indeed come. He shall restore all things, by leading the fathers to take proper care in training their children, and the children to be properly dutiful to their parents, and inducing men to repent of their sins. This he shall do before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Second Advent."

In some sort he may be said, and may be understood, to have come already; for *John* is come in his spirit and power, and has preached repentance before the First Advent. He has been a likeness, a shadow of the real messenger, the real herald; just as the first humble and peaceful Advent itself is a likeness, a shadow, an assurance of the great and dreadful Advent which is yet to come.

I do not wish to speak positively on such a subject, brethren; but I am sure that the language of the

Bible in different places makes such an interpretation and such an expectation neither unreasonable nor in any degree inconsistent with the words of Holy Scripture.

Whatever be the right interpretation of the prophecy, whether Elijah is yet to come in person, according to the literal meaning of the words of Malachi, or whether that prophecy is sufficiently fulfilled by the mission and ministry of the Baptist; certain it is that during this time it is our duty, the duty of the Clergy, to be instant, in season and out of season, in warning you of the Judgment, and in warning you to prepare for it; for the Lord may come when ye think not, and at a moment when you look not for Him.

Remember that however distant that day may actually be—a hundred years off, or a thousand years off, or I know not how far off—yet to each one of us it is really no farther off than the day of our own death; and who shall venture to say how near *that* is? After that day there will be no change. As the tree falls, so it must lie. As death finds us, so shall we be for ever. If death finds us in Christ, faithful and earnest in our faith in Christ, then shall we surely be His to all eternity; if death comes upon us in the midst of unrepented sin, how can we have any doubt

but that our portion must be with the evil and outcast spirits?

And therefore the work of preparation—preparation for death, preparation for judgment, preparation for eternity—is one of pressing, instant, important necessity. No man can safely put it off for a day; no, not for an hour. No man can have a thoroughly happy hour unless his heart is free from the dismal danger of dying unprepared. We pray in the Litany to be delivered from *sudden death.* Do you suppose that means that Christian people wish for a lingering rather than a rapid end? that they pray that God may not take them when it is His pleasure to do so, even in a moment? No, not so; though, indeed, for those who have been thoughtless and careless in life it *is* a great blessing to have the gradual on-coming of the end, the gradual weaning of the soul from earthly things which a long sickness brings with it, and time to turn the mind to serious repentance and very earnest prayer. But those who are at peace with God, those who daily repent them of their sins, and daily pray for grace and pardon, need not be afraid of a sudden summons. Nor does the prayer in the Litany ask to be delivered from such an end as that. No; we ask that it may not be sudden *to us,* that it may not come upon us unprepared, lest, coming

suddenly in that sense, it find us sleeping—thoughtless, forgetful of God, impenitent, full of sin unforgiven. From such sudden death as that may the good Lord indeed deliver us! From such *sudden*, terribly sudden, death as that—sudden, not so much in its coming in a moment, as in its coming on our souls in the midst of our sin and guilt, and without a thought of repentance or faith, without a prayer, without a spark of well-grounded hope,—from such sudden death as that, the good Lord deliver us all!

But the preparation must be made by each one for himself.

No one of us can see into a brother's heart. No one of us can have more than a very faint and imperfect idea of what really is the state of another's soul. And, therefore, we can help each other but little. We can, a little. Earnest warning, judicious counsel, brotherly, fatherly advice, may do some good; but the preparation, the real preparation of the Christian soul for death and judgment, must be done inwardly by each one for himself. You must not rely upon any other—not on father, or mother, or clergyman, or friend, or brother. There is only One Who knows every secret of your soul. The Holy Spirit of God alone penetrates and sees, better by far than you do yourself, every secret thought and wish that is within you. In

His presence, and alone—alone with God—you must make your peace with God, and so prepare yourself for the inevitable Advent.

Do you ask me how shall you prepare? Oh, brethren, you know as well as I do; and yet I will venture to give a few hints on the subject, though you might as well give them to me as I to you.

You must think over your sins; not in a light and easy and cursory way, but carefully and seriously. This is perfectly necessary. There can be no peace which does not begin with penitence.

And you must confess them. On your knees before the All-seeing God, you must lay open your heart to Him Who knows it all before you say it, but Who requires your hearty and sorrowful confession before He will pardon it.

And you must pray; not going over words of prayer with your lips, while your heart is busy thinking of other things, so that you hardly know what you have been praying for; but with the earnestness and fervour of one who feels the weight and bitterness of sin, and desires of all things to be relieved from it.

This—self-examination, confession, prayer,—this is the necessary beginning; nothing is to be done without this.

And you must put your whole trust and confidence

in your loving Saviour, Who, having given Himself for you, will surely give you all things that you need, if you render yourself wholly to His service, and rely on His love.

But remember that this faith and this love must not be a passing feeling and sentiment only—warm to-day and cold to-morrow; warm on a Sunday, and chilled and forgotten on a week-day. The faith which is like an ague, a thing of hot fits and cold fits, is not a healthy, happy faith. No; it must show itself in steady, consistent, manly, regular holiness. It must not be afraid of being seen and known. It must be simple and strong. It must be to-morrow what it is to-day. It must last on to the morrow's morrow, and every day. Not a thing of excitements and revivals, and fallings back; but an honest, determined rendering up of ourselves in body, soul, and spirit, to be the faithful servants of Christ, and to do all that He has commanded us to do.

Oh that we might thus prepare ourselves to meet the Great Day! Oh that we might, one and all, turn to God thus with all our souls, and wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as men not afraid nor dismayed, but ready to exclaim with the beloved Apostle at the end of the Book of the Revelation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"!

I said that the Old Testament ended with the prophecy of the harbinger of the First Advent. Even so the New Testament ends with the glowing anticipation of the Second Advent. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

So may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all; teaching us, each one in the depth of his own heart, to search out our sins, to confess them, to pray for pardon, to devote ourselves to the service of God in all our lives, and so to prepare ourselves for the day when we shall stand before His Throne to receive the sentence—God grant it be the sentence of acceptance for His sake—which the Son of man shall then pronounce upon us.

Christmas

St. Luke ii.

10. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*
11. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

THE great Christian festivals have, each of them, a peculiar character of their own. Easter is a day of triumph and victory. There has been a dark season before it of humiliation and sadness; but in the bright dawn of Easter morning the glorious victory over the grave is won, and Christians feel that they rise with Christ, and are partakers of the triumph. Spring weather and spring flowers, lengthening days and clearing skies, all form the bright accompaniment of a day of such holy exultation following upon so serious and terrible a conflict.

Whitsunday, again, is a day of serious and very thoughtful thankfulness. The other Comforter comes to take the place of the Lord of the Church, absent in

the flesh; and Christian people, solemnly affected, awed and exalted by the consciousness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God in their hearts, gird themselves up afresh for that lifelong sanctification which is to make their calling and election sure.

Christmas Day is characteristically different from both of these. It has a softer, tenderer, more domestic interest about it. It falls in with other feelings, and blends with some of the closest and dearest associations of family life. A firstborn child in common life,—born, it may be, after a season of gloom and distress; an heir, it may be, of a throne, or born in the humblest life,—what is a firstborn child but the sweet and happy embodiment of hope and promise, of happy days, of daily developing delight, of good and noble manhood? So it is in our common and everyday life; and those who do not know it of their own, know it well for their friends, how deeply, thankfully (thankfully even to tears of gratitude and joy) sinks into the heart of man the delight of a new-born, a firstborn child. So, I say, of common life and ordinary families. But this day saw the birth, not of the firstborn of ordinary human parents, but of the Child of heaven and earth, the Child of God and man, the Child for Whom both heaven and earth were waiting in anxious expectation of

redemption and restitution, the Child of hopes unspeakable—hopes that could not be frustrated to those who would hold them fast; the Heir of heaven, the Heir of earth, the Heir in Whose inheritance all men might regain the inheritance of their Father's Kingdom.

Born as any other human child in poverty and humbleness, with all the tenderness and helplessness of any other infant, cradled in the manger, fondled by a Virgin Mother, from the very first hour partaker of the trials and troubles which each one of us and of our children has partaken of,—how does the blessed Babe of Bethlehem make us feel that our religion is no cold dogma presented to the mind, no abstract tenet to be recognized by the intellect only, but blent with everything that is sweetest and nearest to our hearts, designed to win us to the willing service of God by the agency of our deepest and tenderest sympathies!

Has any one of you, brethren, the precious possession of a new-born, still more of a new-baptized, child? As you look upon its face with the warmest parental love, learn to think of Christ so born and so lying in His Mother's arms; and find in and through your own happiness another access to the love and union with Christ, and another link to bind you and yours to

Him. Has any one lost, in the providence of God, such an one, feeling in his heart the sore and the blankness of such a bereavement? As you think of the Infant Christ, that tender human Babe, remember that He is the Eternal Son of God as well, the Redeemer, the Almighty Lord; and that your Christian child, who bore His earthly likeness while he was with you, is not less His, not less like Him, not less—but much more—with Him now, than if he were growing into youth under your own eye, and gladdening your heart with the earthly joy that you once hoped for. All these, brethren, are Christmas thoughts; and with them come the family meetings, the outpourings of neighbourly charity, even the kindly winter decorations of our houses and our churches, all surrounding our Christmas Day, and contributing to give it that peculiarly home-like, soothing, domestic character which we all attach to it.

I ventured just now to illustrate the subject of our Lord's Birth by referring to the bright hopes which accompany the birth of an ordinary infant, when all is promise, hope, and joy; when nothing has yet occurred to damp or check the golden anticipations of thankful parents. I seem to read in the Angel's words, in which the annunciation of the Lord's Birth is made to the shepherds of Bethlehem in the text,

something like the same absence of forecast of evil and disappointment. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, *which shall be to all the people.*"

To-day all is joy, hope, and promise; not a word said of rejection, of unbelief, of suffering, of death; not a word of sin, of apostasy, of believers falling away; not a word of a world preferring to live in darkness rather than acknowledge and love the light. "Good tidings—great joy—to all the people." To-day all is bright and hopeful. "To all the people." To the Jewish people first; to all other people afterwards. Good tidings—great joy—to all the people; for this day there is born unto them in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. But we, brethren, have seen beyond the Birthday. We have seen how that Child grew in favour with God and man, up to manhood. We know how He taught; how He was despised and rejected of men; how He was delivered up to the Roman governor, deserted, crucified, pierced, buried. We have read how His followers were persecuted and slain. We know how His Faith, spreading, no doubt, ever, has yet been continually checked by opposition, scattered by division, dishonoured by sin. We know how in this day it advances feebly in heathen lands, because in Christian lands it is so feebly held and so imperfectly practised.

We see and know, only too well, how in our own land infidelity and scorn, sin and the love of sin, indifference and worldliness seem to eat, as it were, the heart out of our national faith, till we come almost to doubt whether we deserve to be called a Christian nation at all. We have too just reason to fear that that which was designed to be, which might have been, which ought to have been, good tidings of great joy to all people, has proved to be to a vast number tidings, not of joy, but of sorrow—of deepened guilt, and deepened condemnation. For how sad and sore must be the case of those who, when light has come into the world, have deliberately preferred darkness; who have chosen to live and to die in sin, even though the Lord of heaven and earth has been born upon earth a human Child, and has lived and died to rescue them from it!

There are, indeed, some who, in this generation, have ventured to surmise, and even to teach, that it may not be so in the end; who have been so audacious as to hold out a hope, even to wicked men, that at some ever so distant day, by some means or other not made known to us, all, even those who died in unrepented sin may at the last be made partakers of the Redemption of Christ, and of the happiness of Heaven. But no; the voice of Holy Scripture is

perfectly clear and strong and unequivocal against it. There is no shadow of ground for any such hope. It is forbidden by the whole language and tenor of the Gospel. Terrible as the thought is, it forms part, an essential part, of the revealed Truth. There is no further hope for those who die impenitent, in sin, out of Christ, having quenched the fire of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. We, indeed, do not know who are thus impenitent; we cannot read the deep secrets of men's hearts. God be praised that we cannot! But the sentence, though we know not to whom it applies, is as clear and undeniable as the Gospel itself. We may be ever so near in life—husband and wife, brother and sister, near friend and near friend, undistinguishable in outward circumstances upon the earth, and undistinguished (so far as man can see) even in character and apparent holiness—yet, if the one dies repentant, faithful in Christ, and the other still clings to his sin, and has put away his faith, and, being devoid of the Spirit of Christ, is none of His, their faith separates at the grave, never to come together again: the one to grow brighter and brighter until the perfect day of God; the other——

But these thoughts, true and deeply important as they are, and never to be dismissed from the inner consciousness of the Christian's heart, are not those

which belong most appropriately to the sweet solemnity of Christmas morning. To-day is a day of hope, thankfulness, joy, promise. Was not our redeeming Lord born in the flesh for our salvation as to-day? Is not the picture presented to our mind's eye to-day—the lowly manger, the adoring Virgin Mother, the Divine yet tenderly human Babe? Are we not met to praise Him, and pray Him to make the salvation, which began as to-day, sure to us? Are we not invited to partake of the sacred Communion of His most blessed Body and Blood to-day? Are not the tokens of His love, the offers and promises of His mercy, all round us? Then, let us keep this holy day with peaceful, happy, Christian thankfulness. Let it be a day of sober joy, of outpouring charity, of mutual Christian love, of deep-minded peace. It is a day of family concord; a day for special parental love, and special filial duty and obedience; a day on which the internal affection of families should be warmest and brightest; a day that should know of no bickerings or irritations between those of the same household, brothers and sisters, fellow-servants, and all others. It is a day for neighbourly kindness, mutual forgiveness, interchange of all friendly offices. It is a day which, opening our hearts in grateful love to God, should open them also in brotherly kindness

to one another, and help us all on towards that blessed goal which we all hope to reach, and which none will reach so surely as those who are doing their best to enable others to reach it also.

Such, I say, is the Christian man on Christmas Day, in his family, in his parish, in his town, among his neighbours; such outwardly, such as men see him. But oh, brethren, what is he inwardly? what is he before God, as God sees him? This is the really deep and serious question. The outward part is easy. It is popular, pleasant, fair seeming. But the heart within? the inward faith? the secret feeding upon the Word of God? the secret breaking down of the passions and lusts which keep up war in our members, and strive constantly to carry us away captive, or keep us captive to sin? What is the real state of the heart of the Christian man this day? his real self, as he knows it in some degree, and as God knows it still better?

I will tell you, brethren, what it ought to be. The Christian man ought to have been on his knees to-day, and, in preparation for to-day, searching out, confessing his sins—sins of thought as well as act, which none but God and his own soul knew of—praying with all his heart that God will pardon him for Christ's sake, and enable him more and more,

by the growing strength of the Holy Spirit in his heart, to beat down Satan under his feet at last, and enable him to render a better and worthier service before he dies.

He ought to have dwelt upon the sacred thoughts of this day—the exceeding great love of Him Who to-day was born in human likeness to be Emmanuel, "God with us;" and the exceeding sinfulness of that sin, his own in no inconsiderable part, which made that wonderful Incarnation, with all its wonderful sequel of suffering and death, necessary. He ought to have risen from his knees, soothed in his confession, comforted in the faith of pardon, assured of the fatherly mercy of God, certain that the Holy Spirit of the Father is still with him, witnessing with his contrite spirit that he is the child of God. He ought to be coming in that true repentance and that strong faith to the blessed Communion of His Lord's Body and Blood, to find the meat indeed and the drink indeed, which is to feed his soul with spiritual strength, and bring him unspeakably near to the Redeemer Whom he loves and means to serve. He ought to be resolved, so doing, to make and find by the help of God this Christmas Day a day not of peace only, but of fresh strength and holiness; a day to help for many days; a day lifting

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him up so much higher than he was lifted before in all holiness and real godliness; another great day gained, and he blesses God that he has been spared to see it.

But, brethren and neighbours, Christian men and women, do you recognize yourselves in this description? Is this—can we honestly hope it is—a real picture of you or of me? It might be—thank God it yet may be—it surely ought to be. God only knoweth on how many of us this Christmas Day is the last that shall ever dawn upon the earth; whose account is well-nigh closed; which of us, all unawares, is among the very next to be summoned to the invisible world, the immediate presence of God. We know not; we do not desire to know. It is well. We do not murmur nor repine. But we desire to take it to heart. We desire to remember continually that soon, and we know not how soon, our own call may come, and others may be pointing the same Advent and Christmas lessons by the example of our summons, as we now point them by those of others. It is well: provided that we are really wise in time, that we do not waste ourselves in words; that both we whose duty it is to speak, and you whose part it is to hear, remember how short our time is, and set in earnest about the one great work—the one

great work of turning to God in Christ, penitent and faithful, before we die.

But, brethren, I must again check myself. I do not wish to dwell on thoughts of sorrow, though somehow they will come up over and over again in connection with the brightest and most cheering things. But to-day is Christmas Day, and to-day's topics are happy and joyful ones—happy and joyful ones to those who *have* a right to be joyful, and those who are still spared that they may yet win that right; joyful, not with a light, idle, frivolous sort of joy, but with a lofty, noble, Christian joy, based on the firmest of faith, and deep laid in confession of sin and the sure hope of pardon. To-day is a day of joy in heaven and earth—the day of the Angels' rejoicing. Did they not sing aloud—a multitude of the heavenly host of Angels, praising God, and singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"?

May we have grace to join, not in word only and outward utterance, but in the very depth and truth of our souls, in that divine anthem; and find, to the glory of our good and merciful God, true peace even while we remain here upon the earth—the true peace which comes of the loving good will of God restored to us in the coming of Him Who was born in the flesh as on this happy and blessed day!

Epiphany

ISAIAH LX.

2. *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*
3. *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

THE Feast of the Epiphany has always been regarded in the Church as one of great and special meaning. From some cause or other it has come to be less regarded among ourselves than it ought to be. Perhaps one cause is that it is called by so hard and inexpressive a name. People do not readily remember what the word "Epiphany" means; and even the explanation of it given in the Prayer-book, "the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles," does not make the meaning so clear as to force it at once upon every understanding. Every one knows the meaning of Christmas Day, Christ's Birthday; and of Good Friday, the Crucifixion Day; and of Easter Day, the Resurrection Day; and of the Ascension Day. I

am not quite so sure that they always remember the meaning of Whitsunday, the day when the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in the Church. But least of all does the word *Epiphany* come clearly to their minds in the meaning of it.

In the ancient Church, this festival was known by the name of the *Holy Lights*. The reason for this name is found in the second verse of the text; for it was on the day of the Epiphany that the Gentiles came to the Light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. And they believed also that on the same day of the same month in after years, He twice showed His Light in a remarkable way: namely, that He was baptized in Jordan, when the heavens opened and the Dove descended upon Him; and that a year after, He changed the water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee. To commemorate these shinings of His Divine Light before men, they always lighted up their churches on the day of Epiphany with candles and tapers, and gave the day the name, as I said, of the Holy Lights.

But we must confine our attention this morning, brethren, to the first of these things—the real Epiphany, or Manifestation of the Infant Christ to the Gentiles.

You know quite well that up to the time of our Lord's Birth all the nations of the world, except the

Jews, had no knowledge of the true God, nor of real religion. The people sat in darkness; God, for good reasons, no doubt, confined the knowledge of His will to the descendants of Abraham. The rest of the nations had nothing but the faintest glimmerings of light, which their own ideas of right, and the remains of early religion, not quite extinct, furnished them with. Darkness, almost total darkness, covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.

But God did not design that it should be always so. He always purposed that the true Light should in the end be shown to all mankind. He prepared it for many generations in the chosen people. He sent His prophets. He ordered the whole fabric of His Law. He kept His people quite apart from all other nations, till the time came when in Christ the Salvation which He had been so long preparing should be thrown open to the whole world, and all mankind be admitted to share in what, till then, had been confined exclusively to the Jews.

Now, the first token that was shown to the Gentile world that the great Light had arisen which was to cast its beams over them as well as over the small nation which alone hitherto had known God, was the star, the wonderful star, the new star which was seen in the sky.

On Christmas night, while the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks, and the Angels sang their song of glory and peace and good will, there was another thing, which the shepherds did not see nor understand, and which the Angels did not speak of. A new star, one never seen before, suddenly shone among the multitude of the other stars. The shepherds did not see it. The Jewish people did not see it. The Romans did not notice it.

But far away in the East, where from the earliest times men had studied the heavens and knew all the movements of the heavenly bodies, there were men watching. No doubt they had been watching for a long time; for they expected a new star. They knew that it was coming, and they knew what it would signify when it did come. They knew, and all men knew in some strange way which we cannot explain, that just about that time a child was to be born in the land of the Jews, who was to be a great king over all the world. And they knew, what other men in general did not know, that a star would be seen in the heavens to declare where He was born.

So, night by night, they searched the sky; and we may well conceive the strange and delighted joy with which, all of a sudden, in one winter night, they saw it—shining clear and not to be mistaken—in a part

of the heavens where no such star had ever been seen before. How long it shone we cannot tell. Certainly long enough to be quite beyond any doubt or question; certainly long enough to make them feel quite sure that the sign so long looked for was actually given, and to set them forward with all the most precious gifts their country supplied to go and worship the Infant King.

And then it disappeared. It is plain, from the account of St. Matthew, that in all their long journey from the East to Jerusalem they did not see it. They travelled on in faith. The sign was given. They knew where to go to. And on they went, nothing doubting but that when they reached Jerusalem they should hear tidings of the wonderful Infant so wonderfully made known to them.

They arrived at Jerusalem. Still no star. They asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" None could tell. None had heard of Him.

But the inquiry, and the arrival of the Wise Men, and the story of the star, and the gifts, all agitated the minds of the people of Jerusalem most deeply—from Herod the King, who trembled for his own throne and power, to all the people who were looking for the Messiah with the utmost anxiety, the long hoped for and now daily expected Consolation of Israel.

Where, then, should they go from Jerusalem? Let the scribes be asked. They study the prophets; they know exactly all that the prophets have said of the coming Messiah. The king calls a solemn meeting. All the chief priests and scribes of the people are assembled; and the king asks, "Where, according to the prophets, is the Christ to be born?" They answer at once, and without hesitation, "In Bethlehem of Judæa: for doth not the Prophet Micah say, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, Who shall rule My people Israel?" The answer is given. The hypocritical king pretends to be as much pleased as the people, and makes particular inquiries of the time when the star appeared, in order to know exactly how old the Child was. The Wise Men set forth again—a short journey now; only six miles more to the south. They go, apparently, in the night. They look—(no doubt they had looked in vain every night since they left their home)—they look, I say, into the well-known place in the heavens, and, behold, once again the beautiful star, shining as clear and bright and not to be mistaken, as they had seen it in their own distant home in the far East. It led them. It stood over the house were the young Child was. I will not

undertake to say positively how this was—whether it suddenly appeared just when they reached the house, and so marked the end of their long travel; or whether it was seen during all their six-mile walk in the southern sky before them, and then, when they reached the house, disappeared again, to show them that there was no further need of the morning star now that they were come to the actual brightness of the Rising Sun Himself. Anyway, the star appeared but twice—once to tell them to set off, and once to tell them that they had arrived. All the rest was faith. Faith that made them watch; faith that made them gather their gifts; faith that made them set forth on their long journey and maintain it to the end; faith, again, in the prophet's words, that made them turn their faces southward from Jerusalem, and seek the little town which was to be famous in all the world, as the Messiah's birthplace.

And when they saw the star again, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, which by a divine guidance that they knew not of they had collected, they presented unto Him gifts: gold, the offering to a King, the sign of

universal dominion; frankincense, the offering to a God, the sign of His being the true Son of the Most High; myrrh, the sign of His true manhood, the sign that He was the true Son of man Who should die, and His Body be embalmed with sweet spices, and be laid in a man's grave.

The day of the Gospel had dawned: the sunrise of the whole world had begun, and the Gentiles, till now excluded from the knowledge and the grace of God, were divinely called to come to the brightness of the rising. Divinely called, gratefully obeying the call, gathering of all their best and choicest, they laid all down in thankful devotion at the young Child's feet.

It was the manifestation of the Redeemer, the Light of the world, to the Gentiles. But much had yet to be done before the Gentiles were received into the full equality of privilege and grace with the Jews. It was above thirty years yet before the rending of the veil of the Temple showed that the partition wall was broken down by the Death of Christ, which divided Jew from Gentile; still longer before the commission was given to go teach all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Holy Trinity; still longer before the vision at Joppa and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Cæsarea bade St. Peter baptize Cornelius, the

first Gentile Christian, into the Church; still longer before the Church, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, decreed that Gentiles might be freely baptized without circumcision, and received at once, without the Law of Moses, into the sacred membership of Christ.

And so by degrees the gates were thrown wide open, the old exclusion all taken away, and every Gentile and Gentile-born child in all the wide world freely admitted—invited, pressed, urged to accept the blessed grace of God in Christ, and by faith and baptism to become an heir in Christ of His everlasting Kingdom. And the tidings spread to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west—even to distant England—even to the little islands of the sea; and for, I suppose, not less than a thousand years this little village, like other parishes in the land, has lived under the sunshine of that Light, the morning star of which we celebrate in the Festival of Epiphany. It is the Gentiles' feast; it is our feast. That star first woke up our fathers to come and lay themselves, their best, their all, before the Divine Child Who was born in Bethlehem to be the King for ever over His true Israel.

But are we indeed living as under that sunshine? The light has come, and we are called to be thankful for it. But there is still terrible condemnation, as you know well, brethren, for such as will go on loving

darkness rather than light, because they are resolved that their deeds shall be evil. Believe me, or rather believe the words of the Lord Himself, every one that doeth evil and doth not repent, doth really hate the light and is afraid of the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. If we live in sin—if we will go on sinning and will not repent, we are really hating the sunshine, hating the brightness of the Christmas rising, hating the blessed morning star that shone that winter night in the eastern sky; loving the darkness, the gross darkness, in which the nations lay before that sacred and holy dawning of the Saviour's light.

Nay, let us rather claim our share in that exceeding great joy with which the Wise Men saw the first brightness of that star when they saw it in the East, and recognized it again when it lighted them to the Saviour's cradle at Bethlehem. If we *do truth*—that is to say, if we really try to please God by living according to His will, by constant prayers, by confessing our sins, and ever asking His pardoning grace to enable us to obey better—then *we come to the light*, and our deeds will be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

They saw the star, and, having seen it, they went on in faith—faith in the promise, faith in the pro-

phecies. They did not need to see the star every night. It was enough that they had seen it once, and could not be mistaken.

Let us go on in like faith: not craving more helps, not expecting that God will send us any special calls, but faithfully, contentedly, and obediently going on till we find, not the Infant Lord in His cradle, but the glorified Lord upon His Throne of Judgment; going on from day to day, from month to month, from year to year, laying before Him our best, devoting our very bodies, souls, and spirits to His service, feeling no doubt, but earnestly believing that as we know Him now by faith, so when our death comes we shall have the full enjoyment of the glorious Kingdom into which He has already entered, and which He has prepared for those who follow Him in true faith and holiness unto the end.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

St. Luke xvi.

31. *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

FEW persons, I should think, have read this parable or history of the rich man and Lazarus throughout, or heard it read, without feeling somewhat distressed by it. I do not mean that the sufferings of the rich man in Hell distress them so much. His luxury and his neglect of the poor beggar might seem to have earned the lot which he received after death; though even in this point it is to be observed that no overt *sin*, as we consider sin, is laid to his charge. He is represented as enjoying his own, and he is not accused of having ill-treated Lazarus in any way. But when in Hell he lift up his eyes, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and, after vainly asking for some relief of his own personal sufferings, began to ask on behalf of his still surviving brethren upon the earth; and when he received from

Abraham the final answer, which I have read in the text, it seems to me that our natural feelings are somewhat shocked and distressed. There is much unselfishness in the interest which the rich man expresses for his absent brethren. Instead of wishing for companions in his misery, he would fain spare them, if he could, even though his own sufferings should not be at all lessened by their escape. Then, again, the manner in which Abraham is described as receiving his request sounds hard and unsympathizing. And, above all, we are apt, I think, to feel as if the final answer, with which the whole tale is closed, is not only somewhat harsh, but possibly beyond the necessary truth. We are disposed to feel it not so clear but that if one had gone to them from the dead, if they had seen a real apparition of their brother from the place of torment, they might, perhaps, have repented, and, repenting, have been saved.

It seems to me to be more important, on account of this impression, to examine the subject with as much attention as we can; for most assuredly the wisdom and the justice and the mercy of God will vindicate themselves in every portion of His Word, if we understand it rightly.

I observe, then, in the first place, that Abraham is represented as saying, and the rich man as not

denying, that "Moses and the prophets," if they were diligently and honestly followed, would suffice to save the souls of his brothers, as they would have sufficed to save his own soul from the torments which he was undergoing. No question arises, in the dialogue which the Scripture parable relates, as to the Jews having *enough*, in the way of precept, knowledge, and evidence, if they would duly attend to it; no question, I say, arises on this part of the subject. The only question, so to call it, begins later, as thus. If it be granted that the knowledge and evidence which are already before the people are in themselves weighty and strong enough to carry the proper consequences of obedience and devotion, how far would such a thing as the rich man craved for his brothers, a return from the grave of one who could tell them of its secrets, operate to produce the devotion which was wanting? "*Nay, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*" Is the rich man right? Would it be so?

Now, I understand the reply of Abraham, if I may venture to paraphrase it, in this sense: "That which you ask for your brothers would do them no good. They know the will of God; they know His laws, His judgments, His mercies, and His threatenings quite well already. They have their divine teachers,

whom they believe and profess to follow. Let them hear them. It is not more warning, it is not more knowledge, it is not, so to speak, a ghost come from the grave, that they want; it is a good heart of belief and obedience. You may accumulate evidence to them, but it will do them no good. You may heap more coals of fire upon their heads by such things, but you will not touch their hearts. They will not be won over; they will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. If the heart be in fault and the inward spirit unwilling to submit itself to the faith and obedience of God, you will not win it over by frightening it, or adding fresh and more startling evidence. If the evidence were imperfect or insufficient, there would be use in making it stronger; but if it be already ample, no good will come of heaping it up with outward warnings or supernatural appearances. Nay, it would rather deepen and aggravate the disobedience, which, if it will not yield meekly and inwardly, will only rise in more perverse and determined rebellion against such outward checks and warnings."

Now, the truth that is involved in this supposed answer is one of great consequence, and the more so because it is by no means universally felt or readily acknowledged. Men do often think that if God would

only vouchsafe them some additional proof, if something startling were to happen, if some sign from heaven might be shown to them, or some awful warning from the grave, they *would* repent—they are sure they would; but that without some such striking and convincing interposition they have no hope of prevailing upon themselves to turn round and serve God in earnest. Indeed, I suppose they sometimes almost come to think that it is hardly their own fault to go on as they do, while God withholds the startling evidence which they crave. Now, I entirely believe all such craving to be as completely mistaken as it is wicked; and that if this very thing were given, it would fail entirely of the effect which they look for from it.

I do not deny that such a thing, if it were to occur, would, at least at the first moment and for a time, produce no inconsiderable effect. A man would be startled, frightened, changed; and at the first it would probably seem as if such a change was deep and strong enough to last. But would it do so? Could it do so? I answer confidently *No.* I might urge that such an effect is but an outward one—a shock, an external thing in which the man is passive only, and the springs of his inner being are untouched—and that such outward shocks, however keenly and deeply

felt at first, do, from the mere force of habit and the simple effect of time, gradually lose their power; so that the shock felt so profoundly at one time would, in the course of a month or a year, necessarily go off and diminish, while the startled imagination recovered its usual tone and became familiar with the recollection, while it gradually ceased to feel the keenness, of the original pain. And this argument is of itself, I think, irresistible and incapable of reply. But besides this mere fading away of impressions, think what a multitude of other difficulties would gather round the remembrance of such a shock, and gradually undermine whatever force it might be supposed to have upon the inward heart and real life of a man. Is he sure that it was real? that it was not a delusion of his senses? No doubt at the moment he thought so; but was he not mistaken? Is it not possible that he misapprehended some things, and so in mistake attributed to an ordinary occurrence a supernatural character? Might he not have been dreaming, wholly or partly? Might he not have been partially or temporarily in some state of mental error? I say that endless scruples and difficulties of this sort would gather round his remembrance as it began to fade away, until it became absolutely necessary that another supernatural interposition should take place

to verify the original one; and this again, fading away in its turn, would require to be supplemented after a while. Then, again, how would a man fight up against the unbelief and mockery of other people, where incredulity and show of argument and science would fall in strongly with his own decaying certainty, and lead him to doubt more and more whether he had not been, in some form or other, the victim of delusion and mistake?

But besides all this, the weightiest consideration of all lies in this—that all such startling and exterior addresses to the imagination of a man are entirely unconnected with his own real inner heart, out of which, after all, are the issues of life and death, and therefore wholly inoperative to make him inwardly holier or better. A man whose heart is deliberately unholy cannot be frightened into holiness. The address is in the wrong direction. The force is applied to the wrong part. It may alarm and terrify him for a time. It may check for a time some outward manifestations of unholiness; but it has not touched, it cannot touch, the real seat of evil—the unholy heart within. It has not brought the secret soul to devout communion with God. How can it? It has stirred the surface—stirred it, perhaps, very heavily; but how can it reach to the depth? As the

fright goes off, the old things return. They were checked, not conquered; held in abeyance, not rooted out; and they spring up again, not in less strength, because they have mastered one check more, overflowed one dam more, and stream on all the more freely because they have succeeded in coming not to mind it. If any person doubt of the truth of what I say, let him remember how little the certain knowledge of consequences is wont to check the downward career of the spendthrift or the drunkard; how they trust to accident, to nothing at all; and how profitless the strongest denunciations and warnings —yes, and visible examples presented to their eyes— are wont to be to save them from the inevitable ruin into which they are consciously rushing.

"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

And what have we, brethren? Not Moses and the prophets only, though we have them, too; yes, and the awful witness of the scattered and undying nation which refused to hear the voice of Moses and the prophets. But we have Christ also, and His Apostles. We have the Church of Christ planted in our land; these ancient piles testifying to the faith

of fifty generations; these church-bells which call us day by day, as they called them, to the sweet sacrifice of prayer and praise. We have our blessed Bible, multiplied in infinite numbers, open, clear, free in all our hands. We have our Prayer-book, our teaching Clergy, our Catechisms, our hymns, our solemn services. We have the example of all the best and holiest people we know. We have the blessed example of all the holy and faithful people whom we have known in life, and who have gone home in the peaceful hope, the lofty faith which belongs to those who have lived and died in Christ. We have the communication of the blessed Spirit of the Most High God dwelling with us, sanctifying our own secret spirits, if they *will* be sanctified, and drawing us nearer and nearer, if we *will* be drawn, to our crucified Redeemer, and in Him to the merciful love of the Father.

Do we crave for more? Does any of us long that the grave should give up its secrets, and drive us, as it were, to repentance by message of truth or warning from the invisible world?

Brethren, we do not know how far the spirits of those who are gone away from us are still conscious of what goes on upon the earth; we have no certainty whatever whether dear friends who

have been taken from us—parents, brethren, those who have been closest to us here—continue to have any knowledge of us whom they have left behind. But they certainly remember how it was with us when they were taken away, and most assuredly they feel the warmest and keenest interest in our religious well-being. And how much more warm and keen must that interest be, now that they themselves are no longer in any doubt or uncertainty, but are in the place of departed souls, looking forward with clear and unchangeable anticipation to the final doom of the Day of Judgment!

Would they not fain warn us, help us, spare us, win us by words or sights of warning if they *might?* and *might* they not, if it would really tend to our good and to the glory of God in our repentance?

But no; the voice of the grave is absolutely silent. No revelation, no encouragement, no word to settle our doubts, to frighten us out of our indifference or neglect, comes from thence. A deep and awful stillness prevails; although we know for certain that their love and interest are inexpressibly great towards us who are left upon the earth, and whose final estate is and must until our death continue to be undecided.

And why so? Is it sternness? is it cruelty that keeps us thus asunder, that maintains that great

and impassable gulf between those whose race is done, whose work is finished, and those who are still engaged in the risks and uncertainties of the race? Oh no, brethren; believe me, it is mercy, it is love, it is the goodness and wisdom of God which desires that we shall serve Him in faith; serve Him for love, not for compulsion; serve Him by giving up our sacred hearts to His sanctifying Spirit; serve Him with a willing, a deep, an earnest and real devotion, in which alone He will acknowledge Himself to be glorified.

We have enough, and we must not crave for more. More would do us no good; more, at least, of such kind as I have been speaking of, would do away with that trial of our faith and obedience to which it is the gracious will of God—the will of God tending to our good and to His glory—that we should be subjected; more of such kind would either puzzle our faith with hopeless perplexity, or take from it all its faithfulness by taking away from it all its possibility of doubtfulness.

It is a striking thing to remember that the Jews, for some of whom the rich man in the parable preferred this petition, did receive a Lazarus from the dead. The brother of Martha and Mary did return to life after four days' sojourn in the grave.

What he told, what he had to tell, I know not. But did they the more repent? Nay, we read that "the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed in Jesus."

No: there is no help nor hope in strange or unusual evidences or warnings such as I have spoken of. The evidence which God has given is enough for our reasonable conviction; the warnings He continually gives us for our continual awakening; and the helps with which He has surrounded us are enough for our secret sanctification and drawing near to Him. And these things will surely prove sufficient for our condemnation if we refuse to listen and avail ourselves of them.

Yes: they are enough for us all, and they are enough for each one of us all; for each has got his separate history as he has his separate being, and each one stands before God now, and will stand before God in the Judgment, even in the midst of the countless multitudes of the whole race of man, *alone*. Much as we mix in life, endless as are the influences and relations and affections which are amongst us; yet the tale which each soul has to tell, the plague which each soul feels, the weakness, the

danger, the remembrances, the consciousnesses of each soul are his own, and they belong to none other. Neither father nor mother, neither dear friend nor brother, neither those whose examples we follow nor those whom we will *not* follow, can in any degree either stand for us, or *directly* affect the state of our souls before God, either now or then. To his own Master—that Master who unerringly knows every turn and winding of his thought—each one of us standeth or falleth, shall stand or shall fall. God calls on us for a brave, personal faith. He requires from each one, be he young or old, a strength of his own; a strength from God; a strength of the Holy Ghost; a strength unborrowed from men, though much helped in many ways by men; a strength in which, alone and in his secret heart, with the grace of the Holy Spirit helping him, he can cling to his Redeemer's love, and do battle victoriously with his own carnal will and frailness.

And for this battle of personal faith and holiness we have the same helps that have been abundantly sufficient to carry generation after generation of our fathers through the waves of this troublesome world, and anchor them safe in the tranquil Paradise of God at the last.

With these we must be content — thankfully,

entirely, happily content: each bracing himself up by the good blessing of the ever-present and ever-willing Spirit to fight his own fight of grace and win his own victory—a fight, remember, never so well fought and a victory never so well won as by those who do all they can to help each other in the battle: remembering always that He Who gave us the work to do, and offers us the help to do it with, is watching with His loving fatherly eyes to see how we use His grace, and strive while we live to purify our hearts, even as He is pure; or, alas (if any of us should be so foolish and wicked), waste our precious trial-time in vain longings for warnings which He does not give, to frighten us out of a sleep from which we do not choose to wake, or strange and new evidences to be the substitute for the strong and manly faith which, by grace, can repent and turn to God in personal earnest!

The Seventh Day Rest

GENESIS II.

2. *And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.*
3. *And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*

WE read in the First Lesson for this Morning's Service the wonderful history of the Creation—how in six great days the Lord God created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them, and crowned His mighty work by creating man, male and female, on the sixth day. We also read how at the first He pronounced all to be very good—no stain of evil, nor sorrow, nor sin in any part; all good, all perfect according to its various kind, all such as He would have it.

And then, the work being done, He *rested;* not as though He were tired or weary, not for His own sake in any way, but for ours; for His rest is full of

very great meaning for us, and it is written in the history in order that we should never forget it.

For about six thousand years that seventh day, that sacred rest of God, has lasted already. In all those years, though His sacred protection and work of government has never for the smallest fraction of time paused or been interrupted, (for assuredly, if it had done so, the whole frame of things would have fallen into utter confusion and decay), yet, so far as we know, He has not created any new thing. The sun and the moon in heaven, the movements of the earth, the living creatures that people the earth and the sea, the plants that grow upon the land and in the water, are those that were created in these six days. So far as we know, we cannot trace or find the creation of a single new thing, not bird, nor beast, nor fish, nor plant, nor shell, nor stone, created new since that holy rest began. We do find that some have died out, and have become extinct. Perhaps some kinds may continually be dying out; but not one of any kind, so far as we know, has been altogether new—a perfectly new thing introduced into the world, since man, created very good, finished and crowned the Almighty work on the sixth day of that wondrous week.

The verses which I have read to you for the text contain two statements: first, that God rested on the

seventh day; and, secondly, that in commemoration of that rest He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

I shall not say more at present on the first of these points, namely, that God did rest on the seventh day; and that that rest, and, as I believe, that seventh day (or, as we should more strictly say, that seventh period) continues, and is in progress at this very day.

It is more to our present purpose to consider the second point, namely, that, in order to commemorate this rest of God, He blessed and sanctified the seventh day.

Now, I shall to-day take it for granted that God, when He blessed and sanctified the seventh day, did intend and purpose to lay down a law that the seventh day—each seventh day, one regular day in every seven—should be kept holy and different from other days; that it should be a day of rest from all ordinary labour, and should be spent in cheerful, sacred service to Him; so as to be a happy, holy, sacred day of rest and worship. I shall also take it for granted that He intended this law to apply to all mankind. He gave it when Adam and Eve were the only two living people upon the earth, and it applied to them and to all their children to the end of the world; so that all people, when they are properly informed of the law, are bound to obey it.

It is a law full of wisdom and goodness. For men cannot work always, and a certain regular return of rest is absolutely necessary to refresh their strength and enable them to begin again continually; and, unless such stated times are set apart for prayer and the worship of God, men are sure to forget Him, and to become altogether occupied with other things; so that this blessed law is one which is plainly of the utmost benefit and advantage to us.

But when we consider the way in which this most ancient and precious law is spoken of in many parts of Holy Scripture, we find that it means a good deal more than this simple sacred law of keeping holy one day in seven, wise and good and merciful as it is.

For the rest of God did at all times point to a great and sacred rest of man.

I do not know whether I shall be able to make my meaning clear, but I will try to do so.

From the very first beginning of the weekly rest, it was intended to signify two things: in the past, it celebrated the rest of God after the Creation; in the future, it looked on to a promised rest which was assured to men.

When God gave the fourth commandment from Mount Sinai, and commanded the people to remember and keep holy the Sabbath day, He did so that they

might commemorate the Creation and the mercies He had already shown to them; and that they might keep alive in their minds the rest that was promised to them, when the wandering in the wilderness should be over, and they should enter into the land of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey.

So, all those forty years the weekly Sabbath celebrated the mercies that were past by, and taught them to look forward to the mercies that were coming.

When the forty years were over, and the rest of the land of Canaan was, by God's mercy, gained, they still had their weekly Sabbath; but now it commemorated, not the Creation only and the escape from Egypt, but their entrance into the land of Canaan also. All that was then past; but it still looked forward to another great rest that was coming, namely, the Birth of the Redeemer and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

During all those long years between the days of Joshua and St. John the Baptist the weekly Sabbath ought to have been the weekly memorial of those mercies past, and the weekly anticipation of those greater mercies to come. But the Jews were very wilful, very forgetful; and actually for nearly five hundred years neglected the Sabbath, either wholly or at least in very great part; so that the seventy

years of captivity were sent upon them in order that the land might enjoy its Sabbaths, which the disobedience and folly of the people had left out and not kept.

Well, again, when the Lord came upon the earth, another rest—another great and blessed rest came; but even that was not the last.

Still the weekly seventh day, the sacred one day in seven, was to last on: looking backwards and commemorating the mercies shown to God's people in former days—the Creation, the passage of the Red Sea, the entrance into Canaan, the Birth, the Death, the Resurrection of the Lord; but still looking on to the further and final rest that yet remaineth for the people of God.

Still one sacred day in seven; but not the same day of the week as before. Before, it was the Saturday, the actual seventh day of the week, for that was the actual day of the original rest of God after the Creation; now, it was to be the Sunday, the first day of the week, because the Resurrection of Christ, which took place on Sunday, was like a second Creation, a beginning of the world afresh, a new birth of mankind.

I do not know, brethren, whether I have made my meaning clear, for I know that the subject may seem a little obscure and hard; but I meant to show you

how in every age the Sabbath day has been designed to be a memorial of mercies past and a remembrance of mercies still to come; and how, as one age passed by after another, and each fresh mercy was given to God's people, one thing after another passed into commemoration and other things rose up in the nearer prospect of the future. Meanwhile, the weekly rest, the sacred weekly rest, took account of them all, and God's people were to take their rest each seventh returning day, and not forget, while they worshipped God and rejoiced in their relief from toil and weariness, that they were also celebrating the great mercies which they had received in past time, and acting, as it were, in type and prophecy and anticipation, the scene of the mercies that are yet in store for them.

And this, brethren, is the way in which I wish we might come to regard our Sundays. They are to be days of holy rest and sacred peace; days on which we are to put away common work and common things; days on which we are to go to church, and turn our leisure to the thoughts of God and Heaven; days as like as we can make them to days of Heaven in the midst of the work and weariness and troubles of the world; days which are not to be gloomy or sad days, still less days of riot or intemperance or vicious idleness; but days of kindly tempers, of sober

joy, of good Christian reading—days, as I just said and will not hesitate to say again, as like as we can make them to days of Heaven in the midst of the work and weariness and troubles of the world.

Then, as I have said, each Sunday as it comes commemorates all the great things that God has done for us. As it were to-day, He rested from His work at Creation. He had made the heavens and the earth, the sun and moon and stars, the sea, and all that is in them. There is a thought for Sunday; for these six thousand years all those wonderful things have been going on as He then had set them going. On Sundays we commemorate that: and in it His endless love and goodness and power in this sweet and beautiful and various universe, with all the wonders that are in it. As it were to-day, He led our spiritual fathers out of Egypt, the house of bondage; as to-day, He led them into the promised land of Canaan. These, too, are thoughts for Sunday; for all these things were done to bring about the great and merciful blessings which we enjoy now and hope for hereafter. As to-day, again, Christ came, and lived, and died, and rose again from the grave for us, bringing the Kingdom of God upon earth, glory to God, peace on earth, and good will of God to men. There, again, is the great Sunday thought and subject

of thought: never to be forgotten on a Sunday and never to be exhausted; a thing to be thought about alone, and dwelt upon over and over again, and talked about whenever Christians meet together, in public, or take sweet counsel together and walk, whether in the house of God or in their own private communication, as Christian friends.

These are thoughts of the past; for half the meaning of the Sunday rest is, as I have said, in commemoration of the mercies that are past.

And then of the future.

There remaineth still a rest for the people of God—the rest of Heaven; and that is the great Sunday thought of all. The rest of Heaven: where, when this world is over, and we have shut our eyes to its sorrows and its pains and its disappointments, we, and all those who have departed this life in the faith and fear of God, shall have our final rest and peace for ever, in the mansions which Christ has prepared for them that endure to the end.

There is a thought never to be forgotten on a Sunday, as it can never be exhausted. Think of the troubles of life! Then they shall be at an end for ever. Think of our own weaknesses and frailties, ever betraying us into something which is not good—something over which in our better moments we

grieve and are sad! *There,* if by God's grace well used we repent and die in faith—there all that weakness and frailty will beset us no more, but we shall be strong in the grace and strength of God to stand before Him, even as the Angels who have not fallen, upright and joyful in praise and service, for ever and ever. Think of all those dear ones who have been taken from us here below, and whom we know that we shall see no more upon the earth! *There,* if by God's help we endure to the end, we shall meet them again; we shall meet them with none of that sadness and decay which cling to our recollection of the scene of their departure, but light, happy, immortal, saved in Christ.

Blessed rest that yet remaineth for the people of God! and blessed weekly rest that is given us now, to keep up and refresh continually the remembrance and anticipation of it! If we spent our Sundays, brethren, in the midst of thoughts like these, would they not, think you, be very precious to us? Would not each Sunday be like a little taste of Heaven in the midst of all the trouble and sin and unkindness of the world? And would not coming to church have a sweetness that would be most precious to us; while we pray along with all our brethren and neighbours, while we sing hymns along

with the Blessed Angels in Heaven, while we listen to the Divine Word of God in the Lessons, while we hear the faithful voice of Christ's ambassadors teaching and exhorting, and while we join the whole Body of the Church on earth and in Paradise in the mysterious Communion of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

Shall we not try to love it? Shall we not, we who are parents, try to lead our children to love it? Shall we not try to make it a day of peace at home—of kindly tempers, of loving words, of good reading, of Christian conversation?

I do not say that keeping the Sunday holy is the chief of Christian duties; but I do certainly say that few things betoken a greater downfall of Christian life, or lead more directly to all sorts of evil, than the neglect of Sunday. Show me a person who never comes to church, to whom Sunday is as other days; and you will have shown me one who can hardly have the secret peace of faith in his heart, or the visible fruits of such faith in his outer life. No; believe me, the Sunday rest, sanctified, made holy by public and private prayers, and devoted to all these sacred memorials of the past mercies of God, and the joyful anticipation of the rest that yet remaineth for the people of God, is a blessed gift of God which no

Christian soul can spare; and which, well used, will give us precious help to reach that further and eternal rest, along with the faithful sons of God who in all ages have died in Christ, and with Him shall inherit the Kingdom.

I will arise and go to my Father

St. Luke xv.

18. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*
19. *And am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

THESE are very well-known words, and very familiar to all our ears. They come, as you well remember, from the parable of the Prodigal Son, which we read in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke; and they are extremely suitable to the season of Lent, into which we have just entered. You, no doubt, recollect how the younger, the prodigal son, having wasted his substance with riotous living, fell into great poverty, and hired himself to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine; and how he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, while no man gave him anything.

I suppose that thus far in the parable the Lord means to teach us the utter misery of sin. For a

time it seems to be bright and pleasant, and it tempts us to all sorts of wild and evil things by the brightness and pleasure which it seems to offer. But the brightness is altogether delusive; and the pleasure, so to call it, is well-nigh gone before it is tasted. And then come the wretched husks, the terrible famine of the soul, when the poor sinner, who has drained to the dregs the cup of sin, finds that he is miserable, hungry, hopeless; that nothing but bitterness—bitterness to the taste, bitterness to the soul, bitterness for the present, and bitterness in the prospect of the future—remains to him.

Now, brethren, I take it to be a thing of the first consequence in speaking of things sacred, to speak in such a way as, if possible, to take the minds and hearts of the people along with us; not to speak with exaggeration, nor in an unreal way, but so that the people who hear may feel and acknowledge as they hear the truth of the things that are said.

And when I say, as I said just now, that then comes the wretched famine, the miserable bitterness of sin, I do not feel sure that all will really acknowledge in their hearts the truth of the words that are spoken. They may still feel, "It is all very well to say so; but, after all, I find sin, as you call it, sweet. I *like* going on so; others seem to like it too. Why should

they do it if they do not like it? Anyway, I like it better far than giving it up, and going on as you would have me do. Besides, I do not think it so very bad. I do not find it so very wretched. I feel easy in it. I like it. Your talk is all very well for the pulpit. It is the regular thing for preachers to say; but in my inner heart I confess that I do not believe it." But for all that, brethren, I say it boldly and I say it again, sin is essentially miserable. I suppose the prodigal, while he was running his course of riotous living, would have given little heed to anybody who had told him how miserable it was in reality, even though it seemed so pleasant. But he found it out at last! He soon finished the cup, and he found it wormwood at the bottom. And so, I say with the most perfect confidence—so will every sinner find, sooner or later. Some find it out, alas! very soon, and, even in the midst of flaunting sin, in the midst of seeming jollity, of debauchery, of drunkenness, while they are trying to look as brave and defiant as they can, have the terrible gnawing of sin, the terrible gnawing of despair, in their very heart of hearts. Else, what mean the tales of suicide we hear?—the dishonest man, whose dishonesty no human being knows of but himself; the poor, poor creature who, in the very midst of wild and apparently shameless sin, throws

herself into the dark river in the night? What is all this and other things like this? Does it not speak like a trumpet of the terrible misery of sin?

You say these are extreme cases. Yes, they are; but extreme cases show us the truth; and, believe me, that all cases are thus far alike, that, if they be not repented of, they are in themselves, and will be found in the end, utterly, utterly miserable. Sin is misery; sin is despair; sin is death; sin, I mean, unconfessed, unrepented, unforgiven; and that not the extreme and atrocious cases of sin only, which we all acknowledge and shudder at, but the sin which we each have committed, the plague of each separate heart, that which each one of us, my brethren, carries in his own bosom.

Enough, then, of the first point. As the prodigal in the parable came down to the husks, the dregs, the famine, the bitterness; so is it, so must it be, with all sinners, with us all, if we have not the grace to do what he did in his unhappiness.

"*And when he came to himself.*" Observe, he did not come to himself at first; he was blinded, intoxicated, made, so to say, a fool of by his sin. It took a long time to waken up out of that sleep. It does do so. It is the common case. In the natural course of things a man is not wont to come to himself,

at least in any good or useful way; in the natural course of things, as the short pleasure ends, misery and despair begin. This is the natural—and but for the blessed working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts this would be, I suppose, the universal—course: sin worse and worse, disappointment, bitterness, misery, despair. The prodigal, however, thanks to the great and most undeserved mercy of God, came to himself; and he said in himself, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

"*I will arise.*" Now here, again, observe that the first movement of grace in the heart of the penitent sinner stirs him to an act, if I may so term it, of *bravery.* It is as though he said to himself, "I will bear it no longer. I will not sink down under it. Please God, I will not despair. I will not reduce myself to a level with the miserable creatures among whom I live. I have been going further and further down in evil and misery, but now I will rouse myself. By the grace of God I will rise out of my wretchedness and grovel in it no longer. I will not, please God, lie down and die in despair; but I will rise up and live."

This observation is not without its value. True Christian penitence is not a mere abject, downhearted thing, which lies down as it were in dust and ashes

and cannot lift up its head. It is in no way akin to despair, or to the language of despair. It is the very opposite of it. It is a strong, brave thing from the first. It is the very work of the Holy Spirit within us; how should it be otherwise than brave and strong? It is full, no doubt, of pain, of genuine and deep sorrow; but it is brave to act, brave to suffer, brave to trust, and even in the lowest humiliation to look up and claim some portion in the old inheritance of the Father's love. The very beginnings of penitence are of grace, and they have the flavour of grace upon them.

"*I will arise and go to my Father.*" Yes, He is my Father still. He did not drive me away. He always acted as a Father towards me. It was not any unkindness on His part that banished me from home; it was my own fault. He was sorry for my miserable wilfulness. He always loved me much better than I, alas! loved Him. I am sure He will not disown me quite. My brother, perhaps, I could not be so sure of. He might, perhaps, throw my sin and folly in my teeth; but I feel sure of my Father. Perhaps he may not put me quite back where I was before; but I shall be most grateful to be restored at all, if it were but to one of the lowest places in His household. Anyway, I will arise, boldly, sadly, and I will go to Him. I feel very sure of my *Father*.

Oh, brethren, if I might break into the current of my thought, and speak of the things that occur to my mind as I go on, how I should like to speak to you now of *a father's love*, as shown in the unfailing love of our blessed heavenly Father, and urge you who are fathers to be fathers after His likeness—so loving, so true, so uniform in the loving discipline of home, setting such an example at home, making home so lovely and sweet in recollection, that the hearts of your children might turn to their fathers, even in their wilfulness and occasional breaking away from right and duty, because they know and feel and trust that the heart of their fathers never fails to turn in love and sorrow to their erring children. But we must return.

"*I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned.*" I will go and open my heart to Him. I will tell Him all the tale of my folly from the first. I will hide nothing. I will tell Him how vile I was, and how very unhappy. I believe He knows it all already; but this shall not prevent my making a clean breast of it before Him. I will tell Him how I turned my back upon Him, and sought for pleasure and enjoyment in things that I knew He disapproved; and I will confess how bitter it all proved. I will tell him how I fell from bad to

worse, till I was tempted to despair altogether, and just to lie down and die in my misery.

"*I will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee.*" I will confess that my offence is very black indeed. I will not try to make it smaller or to excuse it. I will acknowledge (for I know it to be true) that it is not only such as to displease an earthly parent, but that it is very foul and sinful in the eyes of God. I will not say a word to palliate it. It shall be all told, with all its aggravations. I will be in earnest to the bottom of my heart. He knows the difference between earnestness and sham, and I am in no mood nor humour for sham.

"I will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, *and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.*" I will acknowledge that if He should be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, I could not possibly abide it. I will own that I have really forfeited the right to be called His son. I will not expect, for I am utterly undeserving, to be replaced where I was. Only let Him forgive; only let Him look on me once more with those dear fatherly eyes of love and mercy which I still remember so well. And if He would but make me the last and lowest of His household—a door-keeper in His own dwelling—

oh! how far would it be superior even to the rich tents of ungodliness which I once madly ran after, and how utterly unlike the miserable end to which that madness has brought me!

Yes, *I will arise* bravely, and I will go to my Father, and I will say unto Him, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants."

Brethren, this parable, as I have thus hastily explained it, breathes the very voice of Lent. Unlike some other parts and parables of Holy Writ, which rather refer to the first turning of the heathen, or unregenerate, soul to God and Christ, this parable is for those who are sons, who have had their place in their Father's house, who have sinned against Heaven and before their Father, and who desire, if it may be, to be replaced in the sunshine of His forgiving love. It belongs to us; to every one among us, who this Lent, who every Lent, who not in Lent only, but ever and at all times, though at that time more especially, are called upon to arise and go to our Father, and confess that we have sinned against Heaven, and before Him.

But here lies the difficulty. It is easy to say *Arise;* but how shall they arise who are not conscious that

they have fallen? How shall they listen with any true feeling to the cry that bids them arise, when they do not know and have never felt the bitter consciousness of their own sins, and are, in fact, not otherwise than fairly comfortable as they are? Do they recognize the picture of themselves in the tale of the prodigal's misery, as, in his wretchedness and among the husks, he came to himself and bethought himself of the father and the father's home which he had abandoned?

Alas! here is the difficulty—the first, the deepest difficulty. How are we to be convinced of sin? How are we to be made to feel, that though, no doubt, there are endless degrees and varieties of sin and evil among us, if God were to be extreme to mark what is done amiss—extreme did I say? nay, if He were to mark at all for punishment, and not, for Christ's sake and on our repentance, blot out utterly what each one of us has done amiss,—there is not one of us, not one here present, not one of the sons of men, who might abide it?

Oh, brethren, no words of man can waken up this sacred consciousness. Nothing but the Holy Spirit of God, throwing light upon the dark places of our souls, and enabling us in some degree to see ourselves as God sees us, can bring us to ourselves as the prodigal was brought; can teach us to know the depth

and badness of our sins. For we cover ourselves up from our own eyes with such wonderful, such unconscious ingenuity. We manage not to think. We manage to forget. We manage to let other thoughts put the thought of our own sins out of our mind. We busy ourselves so much with other people and their faults. We spin such a web of excuses and palliations and comfortable comparisons over our consciences, that we can very hardly see, and very scantily know, the truth of our own hearts and the sinfulness of our own sins.

Can we, in any degree, imagine how we should stand, if alone before the God of truth and holiness—all talk, all excuse, all subterfuge, all comparison, put away and impossible—with the very reality of our soul, its most secret thoughts as well as its outward acts, laid bare before Him Who knoweth all and can never by any possibility be deceived, if we were tried, say, on any one of the ten commandments of the Divine Law? Shall I speak of the first table or the second? Would not each single law utterly, absolutely condemn us?

I will not speak of the seventh commandment, brethren: though, alas! among them all there is not one law which should lie more heavily, nor be felt more widely, upon the consciences of Christian men

and women than that law of sacred purity; but I will say one word of the sixth.

Is there one of us who could hope to stand for a moment upright before God, if he were tried upon the sixth commandment?

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

Angry with his brother? Then think of the unkind thoughts, the strifes, the spites, the ill feelings, the malice, the envy—secret much of it, no doubt, and perhaps not showing itself in outward deeds—which, if all your heart and all its movements were laid absolutely bare before God, would stand defenceless in His sight! Nay, do not think to say it was not your fault; that it was the fault of some other; that he ill treated you, not you him. All that is part of the miserable self-deceit which now helps to hide you from yourself; it will have no room nor place then.

"And whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Vain fellow,' shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, 'Thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire."

What a wide and deep sore are hard words, spiteful words, unkind words, among us! How they blister and eat into our souls, and we hardly feel them! How wide and hopeless would be the condemnation which they would bring upon us all, if that terrible saying of our Lord were to be understood without the reserve of forgiveness and repentance, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"!

And observe, brethren, that even under the sixth commandment I have not said one word of *actions* of unkindness, of violence, or malice. And are not these common, terribly common, in all our lives? It hardly needs to come to these; for are we not all condemned on the thoughts and the words?

Thus much, hasty and short as it is, of the commandment which forbids anger. What of the commandment which forbids lust? what of the commandment which forbids dishonesty; of that which forbids falsehood; of that which forbids coveting what belongs to others?

Oh that we might, by the grace of God, come to ourselves and know—in some degree, at least, as God knows—how sinful, how wretched, how miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked we are in ourselves; that so we might resolve, with the prodigal in the

parable, to *arise and go to our Father;* to be brave enough to know the danger and to face it; to be brave enough to remember the loving Father whose children we were made in Baptism, and the household of which we were made members; brave enough to feel that, instead of living in our sin, or lying down and dying in our misery, we will arise and go to our Father, and say unto Him, with the deep and true and real sorrow of those who mean what they say, and are in earnest to do what they mean, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." The way is open to us, brethren, the need is clear, the time is short. But short as it is, it is long enough. To-day is the time accepted, to-day is the day of salvation.

We read of the prodigal that he did not only say that he would arise and go to his father and make his confession; but also that he arose and went to his father. May we have grace to do the same!

Confirmation, a Revival

Acts viii.

14. *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:*
15. *Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:*
16. (*For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*)
17. *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

THESE verses, brethren, contain the account of the first *Confirmation* which is recorded in the ancient history of the Christian Church.

It was not really the first; for the Apostles in Jerusalem had certainly laid their hands upon all those thousands who had already been baptized there, and confirmed them.

But when the Christians were scattered throughout the neighbouring countries, on the persecution that arose at the time of the death of St. Stephen, and very large numbers of men and women were baptized

out of Jerusalem by others beside the Apostles, the rite of Confirmation, which was always reserved to the Apostles themselves, was necessarily often put off till an Apostle should come; and so it happens that the first time we hear of a Confirmation is when the people of Samaria had been baptized by Philip the Deacon. He, being a Deacon only, had authority given to him to baptize, but he could not confirm. That power the Apostles kept to themselves, as it was always kept to the Bishops after them; so that the order which we have now was very early instituted in the Church, Priests and Deacons baptizing, and by Baptism giving the first beginning of the new life, the birth of water and the Holy Ghost; and the Bishop, at such later time as is convenient, laying on his hands with prayer, in order that the gifts of the Holy Ghost may be further and more fully given for the spiritual growth and strength of those who are already alive in Christ.

When, in course of time, nations had become so far Christian as that most people were christened when they were infants, and Baptisms therefore were taking place continually, and in every part of the country, it came to pass that Confirmations, instead of following as they did at first, immediately or very soon after Baptisms, were gradually put off to a later age; till

by degrees the Church came to that usage which we have now, and have had for very many centuries, that Confirmation should be fixed for that age at which Christian children, being now come to be old enough to understand the vow and promise made for them at Baptism, and being sufficiently instructed in the truths of their holy religion, should openly, in the presence of God and the Church, take that vow and promise upon themselves, acknowledging themselves bound to believe and to do as their godfothers and godmothers undertook for them, and solemnly undertaking to do so in all their lives.

Why, let me ask, is this rite called "Confirmation"? For two reasons, both very good ones.

First, as I suppose every one would answer, because the person confirmed *confirms* the vow made by other people for him when he was too young to make it for himself. Most true; that is one reason, and, as things are now done in the Church, a very good one. But it is not the best reason, nor indeed is it the real or ancient reason; for you can readily see that when a grown-up person is confirmed, or when Confirmation is administered, as it used to be, immediately after Baptism, this reason would drop to the ground. However, according to our present usage, this is a very good and true reason. It is called Confirmation

because the person confirmed confirms in his own person and with his own lips the promise and vow made for him by his sponsors, when he was too little to make it for himself.

But there is a better reason still. For God confirms *him*. He is himself confirmed. God, Who when he was first christened gave him the new birth of the Holy Spirit in such ways and in such degrees as he was then capable of, and Who has since that time kept the spark of life alive during the years of childhood and its dangers, is now ready to confirm and increase that gift by much larger and fuller outpourings of grace. In Confirmation we have to look for the giving of those sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit which the Prophet Isaiah speaks of in his eleventh chapter as resting richly upon the Lord Himself—the spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the spirit of Counsel and Might, the spirit of Knowledge and Godliness, and the spirit of God's most holy Fear. This is the real and true sense of our being confirmed: when by the ordinance of the Lord there comes upon us, through the imposition of the Bishop's hands and good prayers, the confirming grace of the Holy Spirit; confirming, strengthening, and supporting us in every sort of goodness, and enabling us to be, as by our age we are then able

to be, real soldiers and servants of God for ourselves, self-denying and faithful Christian men and women in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Now, as Confirmation, properly explained, means these two things—the confirming of our own vows by ourselves to God, and the confirming of the grace of the Holy Ghost by God to us—you can readily see that in preparing for it we ought to prepare in two ways. We have to understand our vow—the vow made for us by our sponsors at our Baptism—and for that purpose we have to learn and understand the Catechism, and what were then renounced, and promised to be believed and obeyed, by us. That is, of course, an important part of preparation. It consists mostly of teaching—very important and necessary teaching, but still mainly of teaching.

But the other part of preparation is not less, perhaps more, important. It is that we should get our own hearts ready by confessing our sins and asking pardon for them for Christ's sake, and so going to take the Confirmation vows with the cheerful and happy heart of such as know that they are forgiven, because they have made honest confession; and because they also know that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Therefore,

besides the preparation given in lessons, every person preparing for Confirmation ought to prepare by himself—carefully considering his own life and conduct so far, making humble confession of all such sins as he remembers, praying earnestly for forgiveness for them, and so going, with a clean and clear conscience respecting the past, to take his vows upon himself respecting the future.

Brethren, it is possible that while I have been speaking thus, some may have thought that while remarks like these are very fit and necessary to be made privately, and to those who are themselves preparing to be confirmed, they are less appropriate to the general congregation, among whom it is probable that there are very few of such persons present.

But it is not so, brethren. Believe me, such a great thing as a Confirmation in a parish is, and ought to be, a matter of great interest to the whole parish. The young people who are to be confirmed need your prayers. Do you give them to them? Your sons and daughters, your brothers and sisters, who are to be confirmed, do you pray for them? Have you prayed for them? Your sons and daughters, who are old enough to be confirmed, have you brought them to me, that I may give them such instructions

as they need ? or have you allowed them to come, or not to come, just as in their own wilful choice they fancy whether they shall come or stay away ? Believe me, brethren, when I say to you with much earnestness that in this sort of indifference on the part of parents lies the secret of a great deal of the wilfulness and misbehaviour and divisions which we have to lament in our parishes ; and believe me, again, when I say that those who, when they are old enough, refuse to be *confirmed* by the Holy Spirit in the way that the Apostles taught us to be confirmed, are certainly likely to be confirmed in all sorts of wilfulness and mischief. One way or the other—by the Holy Spirit of God, or in the way of evil—they certainly will receive a Confirmation of some kind.

Then, again, brethren, I would have you remember that these young people for whom I ask your prayers and care are themselves, in all probability, to be the fathers and mothers of a younger generation in the parish. Does it not greatly concern us all that they be brought to fulfil all righteousness in their youth, and be brought under the discipline and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit now, in all the orderly ways that He has instituted for our good ?

Consider again. It sometimes happens, as you know, that times of religious excitement come—some-

body predicts, as foolish people have gone on predicting in every age of the Church, the immediate coming of the Day of Judgment and the end of the world—and from this or some other cause we hear of a *Revival*, as it is called; and young people, unsteady in mind, wilful and ungrounded in the sober faith and lifelong obedience of Christ, are caught by it, and there is great noise and excitement for a time. Do these things do lasting good, brethren? What is the consequence when a year or two has passed after such a thing as this? I will tell you what it is in general; perhaps your own experience may confirm the general truth. The prophecy has turned out false. The last day has not come. The people who were excited to a temporary fright and fervour are colder and more careless than ever. They are shaken out of the old good ways. The parish is divided. Good influences are checked; and it is well if you do not date a good deal of distinct and unquestioned evil from this disorderly and ill-grounded paroxysm.

Now, I say to you, brethren, in soberness and seriousness, that we have in the Church our sacred and real Revivals; sober, real, directed by the Holy Spirit of God, and blessed by the Holy Spirit of God. What can be more truly so called to the young than their Confirmation? It is a sacred time when they are

called upon to pass from their childhood and to enter upon their young manhood as Christians. It is the time when they are called upon to look back over their young lives, and to lay before God in confession the sins of their childhood, when they solemnly put away childish things, and gird themselves up to a manly, lifelong obedience and devotion. Done soberly, seriously, and in the strength of the Holy Spirit, what can be conceived to be more powerful in its work upon the honest and earnest soul of a young Christian than that? No noise, no cries, no contortions—all that is sadly mistaken and unmeaning; but the quiet work of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of those who, having been made God's children in Baptism, now in the strength of their young manhood come before God and His Church to vow themselves His loyal, faithful, and devoted servants for all their lives. Oh, brethren, I wish I could, by God's gracious help, do something to impress you—not only the young people, but the old as well—with the great importance and sacredness of these holy Church rites, which the Holy Spirit has ordered, and which, when they are duly done, the Holy Spirit never fails to bless, that we might see all the baptized children, when they are of the requisite age, brought orderly to Confirmation; that we might welcome all

that are confirmed, at once and regularly, to the feast of Holy Communion; that we might be indeed a Christian parish, united not only in neighbourliness and general kindness, but in the deep Christian unity of the Holy Ghost, that sacred Christian unity which is bound together by the meat indeed and the drink indeed of the blessed Body and Blood of the Lord, spiritually taken and received in Holy Communion. Be this our aim; be this our prayer; be this our cheerful hope!

And it is in such ways as this—by our Baptisms in church in the presence of all the people; by our Confirmations, solemnly performed in the face of the congregation; by throwing ourselves with heart and soul into the regular and well-established rites of the Church, to which the promise of the Holy Spirit is attached—that we shall be best able to gain in any considerable degree the object we propose.

And, brethren, with this view I propose, with the help of God, to endeavour to restore in some degree the ancient and very useful practice of catechizing in church after the Second Lesson at Evening Prayer. It is well that you should hear with your own ears how your children are taught. It is well that you should yourselves be reminded of the things that you were taught when you were young. It is very

well that our young people should be brought up to feel themselves children of the Church of God, having a real place of their own, lambs of the flock of Christ the good Shepherd, carefully tended by those who sit in the place of His under-shepherds, and gradually led up from the sacred birth of the font of Baptism, through the orderly training of Christian children, to Confirmation; and from Confirmation, received for the rest of their lives to the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, which binds them close in the sacred unity of the Church, and feeds their souls with holy strength and peace, and the divine assurance of the favour and love of God.

Be this, as I said, our aim, our hope, and our prayer; not the clergyman's only, brethren, but the people's also; not mine only, but yours. I call on you for help. We all are of the Body of Christ; and though it be indeed our place to speak, and to suggest, and to do the more active work in these things, yet your help, your prayers, your sympathy, your Christian co-operation, are absolutely necessary for success.

So may we, by God's grace, come to unity of faith and worship, and so to holiness and righteousness of living:—rendering to God in Christ our united

service of prayer, praise, and devotion upon earth; and when we have done with this earth and the realities of the invisible world are come upon us, acknowledged, one and all, old and young, children of God's love in Christ, and in Him heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Korah

JUDE.

11. *They ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.*

ST. JUDE in this verse, speaking of the evil men of his own times—Christian times—likens them to the well-known offenders of the ancient Jewish history, to Balaam the son of Beor, who was led by a bribe to endeavour to curse those whom the Lord had not cursed; and to Korah and his company, who perished in their gainsaying—that is, in their opposition against Moses and Aaron.

It is somewhat remarkable that these two great instances of sin, which St. Jude thus puts together as finding their likeness among Christian people, are brought before us this day in the First Lessons for the Morning and Evening Service. The First Lesson read this morning tells us the melancholy story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and the First Lesson to be read this afternoon begins the story of Balaam, who was

hired by the King of Moab to curse the children of Israel. Considering, then, the way in which these things are brought before us this day, and that the Apostle puts them together as warnings to Christian people, it seems to me that we ought not to shrink from examining the lesson that they teach us, and endeavouring to apply it to ourselves.

This morning, then, I propose, with the help of God, to consider the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

It was about the middle of the forty years' wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Twenty years had passed since the crossing of the Red Sea, and twenty more years were still to pass before they were allowed to enter into the promised land. Twenty years without home or house, encamping here and there in the wilderness, with manna, dry and tasteless and unwelcome to their palate, for their chief food; the old people who had come out of Egypt dying off (you remember, no doubt, that only *two* of all that great army which left Egypt lived to reach the promised land); it is, perhaps, no wonder that all sorts of discontent and murmuring arose. Sometimes it was one thing, and sometimes another. Food, water, the authority of Moses, his conduct, discontent at the report brought back by the spies who went to

search the land; all sorts of things gave rise to complaints more or less serious, and spreading more or less widely among the people.

The rebellion of Korah, however, was the most serious, and led to the heaviest consequences of all. Korah was first cousin of Moses and Aaron, a prince in the assembly, famous in the congregation, a man of renown. He was probably a young man, ambitious of power, and jealous of the authority of his great cousins. Discontent and pride made him unhappy in a lower position, and he was not long in finding a pretext for disputing against Moses and Aaron, and setting himself up as a religious leader among the people.

He remembered, as all the people remembered, that when Moses first went up to Mount Sinai God called unto him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children

of Israel." Korah, I say, remembered these great words, and he used them in talking to the people to discredit the authority of Moses and Aaron. "Why," he said, "should these men domineer over us in this way? Are we not all of us, according to God's own word, priests as well as they—a kingdom of priests? Are we not a holy nation? Does not God regard us as a peculiar treasure unto Himself? Why should we submit to these men, to do as they bid us, as if we could not direct ourselves? Have we not got the Commandments as well as they? Has not God promised to dwell among the children of Israel, and to be their God? Away with the pretensions of these men! We will not submit to them. We will show them that we are just as much in God's favour as they are. Let all who are of this mind join with me, and we will soon put down this tyranny under which we have been suffering so long." Very taking words these, brethren, and such as find an echo in men's hearts in all ages. So he prevailed upon two hundred and fifty men of his own tribe, all men of consideration and weight, and upon Dathan and Abiram and On, great men of the tribe of Reuben, to join with him. Reuben was a powerful tribe, consisting of forty-six thousand men, and probably a good many of these followed the lead of their rebellious

chiefs. Accordingly the rebels assembled, Korah, well known as so near a relation to Moses and Aaron, at their head, Dathan, Abiram, and the rest supporting him. It was a formidable rising. Korah, the leader, came forward and addressed Moses and Aaron in the terms that had been agreed upon: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Brave words, and such as no doubt were received with much applause by his supporters. And fair-sounding words, too; for no doubt all the congregation were holy, and the Lord was, as He promised, among them. The fault in them was that their being holy did not prove that they had any right to rise against Moses and Aaron. The congregation was holy, no doubt; but Moses and Aaron were the appointed priests and rulers of it. The congregation was holy; but Moses and Aaron were set to teach and rule and lead it. Words, you see, may be very brave, and, so far as they go, very true; and yet they may be a long way short of justifying men in rising against authority to lead and teach, which comes from God.

How, then, did Moses meet these bold rebels? He fell on his face; ashamed, distressed at their sin, and laid himself before God. No doubt he received from

God direction how to act as he lay thus prostrate in his trouble; for he did not act of his own mind. So he rose upon his feet, and, confronting the triumphant Korah, spake aloud, saying, "Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are His, and who is holy; . . . even him whom He hath chosen will He cause to come near unto Him." He reproached Korah and his Levites with ingratitude to God for forgetting the great privilege which they enjoyed in being already employed in the service of the tabernacle; and called upon them to take their censers, and put fire therein and incense, and to appear before the Lord. Then he summoned the refractory Reubenites. But they refused to come. They had joined with Korah; but theirs was a more vulgar sedition. His was a religious dissent. They merely rebelled against their chiefs for having, as they said, enticed them to leave Egypt and all its good living, to die of misery and starvation in the wilderness.

You all remember what followed. Speaking the words of God, Moses announced beforehand the fate of the rebels. "The ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They went down alive into the pit, and the earth

closed upon them. . . . And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

Such, brethren, is this melancholy story, which, written for our instruction in the Old Testament, is specially referred to by the Apostle St. Jude as applicable even to his own times, and is put before us by the Church this day in the first Sunday Lesson. I confess that I would fain have passed it by, and taken some more general topic to speak to you upon; but it seems to me that I ought not to shrink from speaking the words which Holy Scripture and the Church put into my mouth.

For God hath planted His holy Church upon the earth, and appointed His Apostles to teach and lead His people, and they in their turn commissioned others to succeed to their office and duty, and we in this distant time still live under the same holy order, which is God's appointed way to bring us all, in Christ, to the knowledge and love of Him.

Oh, brethren, let us love and cling to that holy Church which our Lord Jesus Christ hath purchased with His own Blood, and to which in all these many centuries the Lord has been daily adding such as He has graciously placed in the way of His salvation. Let us not, any of us, try to find out ways of our own

invention to help us to draw near to Him, instead of that good old Way which our Christian fathers for sixty generations have followed, and in which they have lived and died in Christ. Let us not indulge in that sort of independence of mind and resistance against men set over us, which soon becomes, which indeed *is*, resistance against God. Men little know, when they begin to throw off these orderly restraints, into what terrible extravagance they are liable to run. It is not at first, nor perhaps easily; but by degrees, when the sober, sacred, long-established belief and worship are departed from, men are like sailors without chart or compass, and are apt to do and think things which would have shocked them if they had known before what they would come to. Oh then, let us, brethren, one and all, love our holy Church, and cling to it with grateful and loving hearts. Here, if it please God, we hope to offer up daily Morning Prayers. I trust that many, when they have leisure, will come to them. No doubt a great many cannot come—the necessary calls of business prevent them; but for those who grow old and are past work, it is a very blessed thing to hear the regular church-bell, and come and worship God in His sanctuary, to join with other Christian neighbours, to be assured of Christ's immediate spiritual presence,

and to hear the Word of God in Holy Scripture. Let us not grow weary of the sober, orderly, grave worship in which our fathers for many, many centuries back have served God in this ancient church. Here they prayed; here they partook in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; here, in the adjoining churchyard, their bones were laid when their summons came to go hence and be no more seen upon the earth. They, that is such as died in faith and true repentance, are now in the peaceful Paradise of God, waiting for the Great Day, which shall bring them, as it shall bring us, to the glorious kingdom of everlasting life. In the Church of Christ we are united with them; in our prayers we are joined with them; in our Holy Communions we are closely, most closely, joined with them in the sacred unity of the Holy Spirit. I cannot tell you how much they know of what goes on upon earth; for Holy Scripture is silent, and beyond what Holy Scripture saith we cannot know, and must not venture to affirm. But this I know, that the whole Body of Christ, alive on the earth and at rest in Paradise, is alike filled with the Holy Spirit of God—that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. I know that the prayers we faithfully pray, and the Communions we faithfully

partake of, do good not to us only, but the whole Body of Christ in all the world. I know that we are members of a holy fellowship which includes all the saints of God of all ages; that Moses and the Prophets, that Apostles, Evangelists, that holy men and women of all nations and times, form part of the same sacred Body as ourselves. Oh, who would abandon his blessed place in this sacred and happy community, this ancient, divine, and sacredly founded Communion of Saints, for any newly invented fancies of impatient men, founded upon nothing, and very dangerous? Who would not rather prize and hold fast the place which is made his by holy Baptism, and by God's grace, which he never ceases to pray for, cling to the Church in which God has been pleased to place him, and resolve to live and die in it, pray in it, worship in it, communicate in it, dwell in it so long as he is well and strong enough to walk, or, as he grows feebler and older, to totter to the continual service; and when death draws near to partake in his bed of the blessed Communion which he had been accustomed to partake of regularly at the Altar-rails; and at last to lie in the consecrated ground, committed to the care and love of God by the loving words of the same Church which had tended and taught him from his birth? Is not this a happy lot, brethren? Is not

this what you would desire for yourself? Is not this what you would desire for those who are dearest to you—for your wife, for your children, for all that you love?

I need say no more. These are the blessings which God has provided for His people in Christ. These are the blessings which, through the sober, ancient, holy administrations of the Church, are, thank God, amply provided for us all.

Only let us take this to our hearts. It is not enough to say that we belong to the Church unless we live accordingly. Even holy Baptism will do us no good, unless we learn, by the grace of God, to lead the rest of our lives after that good beginning. Going to school, and learning the Holy Scriptures and the Catechism, good and blessed as these things are, are yet of no use, unless we learn to be holy in ourselves, to render up our souls and bodies to the service of God, to mortify our hearts, and to repent in all sincerity and faith of our sins before we die. All these things are intended to help us to be good. They will not do instead of being good. Let no man deceive himself. It is a very great blessing indeed to be a Churchman; but that blessing, and all other blessings, will turn into curses and make our condition worse in the end, if we Church-people will sin and will not

repent—if we will only boast of our privileges, and not use them really and faithfully for the purposes for which they are given.

And so, brethren, let us reflect on the melancholy story of Korah and his company, not venturing to boast of ourselves, not undertaking (for it is no part of our duty) to condemn others, but learning more and more, the longer we live, to love and cling to the blessed Church of Christ, in which He has allowed our lot to be cast, and resolved to live and pray and communicate as He teaches us, and, by His grace, to die in her communion and peace.

The Law of Liberty

St. James i.

25. *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

THESE words, brethren, were read to you in the Epistle for this Morning's Service, and for several reasons I wish to bring them again before your attention, and, with God's help, to explain them, and show you what a very useful lesson they teach us.

One chief reason why I wish to speak of them again is that the words are in one point a little difficult, so that it is not quite plain at first sight what the Apostle means.

For what is the meaning of a "*law of liberty*"?

Moreover, St. James uses the same expression again in the next chapter; for he says, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the *law of liberty*." And, except in these two places, you will

not find the expression, "the law of liberty," again in the Bible.

What, then, I ask again, is the law of liberty?

For men commonly look upon a law as something that restricts and confines their liberty. And they commonly think that to be at liberty signifies to be free from law, and to do as they like.

How, then, can there be a *law of liberty* into which a man is to look so earnestly, and to continue in it, and so to be a doer of the work, and so to be blessed in his deed, and by which he is to be judged at the last?

How, I ask, can it be at the same time a *law*, binding people to do all this, and a *liberty*, which sounds as if they were not to be bound at all, but to do just what they please—just what their liking or fancy leads them to do?

Brethren, I think that the answer to this question is one which may, by God's blessing, be of great service to us all to understand and take into our hearts.

God trains us very much in the same way as we train our children.

If we want to make our children industrious, what do we do? We begin by putting them under a rule. We send them to school. We require them to keep

hours. We make them do exactly what we bid them. We do not allow them to loiter or be lazy over their work. We get them into the habit of work. We try, by putting them under a law of work, to get them to like work, to like to be busy, to feel idleness a burthen, to wonder how people can like to be idle, to feel a real pleasure in having things to do, and doing them well and at proper times.

See how we who are parents do naturally try to turn law into liberty, and, so far as we can, get our children to do freely and for choice, what at first they do for duty and because they must.

Take another homely case. Some people find it difficult to get up early in the morning; or, being early themselves, they are troubled because they cannot get their children or their families to leave their beds, and bestir themselves in good time.

What is to be done? The rule must be made: the law must be laid down, and obeyed, carefully, long, and as a matter of duty; and in proportion as it is obeyed perfectly, long, and as a matter of duty, just in the same proportion you will find that it is a law of liberty. Once establish the man, or boy, or girl in full obedience to the law, and they will like it and love it, and not fall away from it. It will come to this—that they will wonder how they ever should

have been so foolish as to lose all the lively pleasure of early rising, the bright sense of refreshment and vigour, the sweet sounds and sights of the fresh morning, and all those things which they only know who are so timely happy and so timely wise as with the rising morn to rise.

Now, I think that every person can see in these two simple instances what I mean.

As the law comes to be obeyed perfectly, it becomes a delight, a pleasure, a freedom. What was at first somewhat troublesome, and required a certain quantity of resolution and self-command to abide by, becomes your own choice, your own liking, your own liberty.

Now, brethren, you well know that it is not about being industrious or getting up early in the morning that I really wish to speak to you to-day. Good and useful and important as these things are, this is not the right place to speak about them. I use them merely to illustrate and throw light upon the more sacred subjects which belong to religion and the service of God. And I beg you to observe how close the likeness is which they bear to these things. Do we wish to find freedom, liberty, delight in religion and the service of God? There is only one way to do so, and that way is by obeying the law of God with our own hearty choice, and firm and constant

endeavour, till that which begins by being *law* ends in being perfect liberty. This is just what those beautiful and most true words of the Prayer-book teach us: "Whose service is perfect freedom." Service! Freedom! Men are apt to think that these things are opposite to one another, that where there is service there cannot be freedom, and where there is freedom there is, of course, an end to service. But no; in the true service of God is the only real, perfect, happy freedom, just as in the obedience of the law of God is the only real and perfect liberty. The Prayer-book does but echo the words of St. James. It is all one whether the words be, "God's service is perfect freedom," or "God's law is perfect liberty." Either way it is the same—no freedom without service; no liberty without law.

Observe, now, how true all this is, and how plainly we ourselves can see it to be true. A man or woman goes to church—now and then—occasionally: letting indolence or some very slight cause interfere often with their coming. Are you surprised that this sort of church-going is irksome and tedious to them? It is no wonder. It *must* be irksome and tedious. And I can tell you confidently that it will go on being irksome and tedious till they make up their minds to go always, whenever they can, till they make it their

own choice, and resolve for their own sake, and because it is good and right, to lose no opportunity of worshipping God with their brethren in His holy Church. The moment they begin to do this in reality, the irksomeness will begin to go off, and the delight and pleasure will begin to be felt. Instead of wishing secretly that he had some tolerable excuse for staying away, a man will be eager to go, very sorry if any necessary occasion prevents his going. He has begun to take it into his own principle, and he is pleasing himself while he is doing that which he used to feel an unwelcome, because an occasional, duty. Service begins to be freedom; law begins to be liberty. He is growing into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He is beginning to have some idea of what David means when he says all those earnest and delighted words about worshipping God and joining with God's people in the offering of joint prayers and praises: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." "Lord, what love have I unto Thy Law! all the day long is my study in it." "I cry unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart." "Oh how sweet are Thy words unto my throat! yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth."

And what I say about church-going is equally true about other religious duties, such as reading the

Holy Scriptures, and especially of partaking of the Holy Communion. As long as you do these things by halves, or less than halves; as long as you read your Bible now and then, or come to Communion rarely, or it may be almost never, or quite never, it will be a trouble and a restraint and an irksomeness to you. And you may be sure that it will go on being so. Perhaps you will not quite refrain from doing these things, because you believe God's Word sufficiently to be afraid of giving them up altogether; but you will find the *law* one of restraint, of burthen, of trouble. You would be glad to be rid of it. And so, I repeat, it will continue to be, until you make up your mind to take to these things thoroughly of your own choice, and always. I will not say that suddenly and all at once you will find the change I speak of, but you will very soon begin to feel it. The chains will fall off, the restraint will disappear; not because you wilfully quarrel with them and say that you are a free man, and may do what you like; but because you will begin to find that there is no freedom so true as the thorough service of God, and no liberty so sweet and real as entire obedience to His law.

Then you will begin to understand the delight which really pious people feel in the regular, orderly services and worship of a Churchman's life, the daily

prayers, the constant study of the Word of God, the constantly returning Communions. I imagine that many people hardly believe in such delight. They think that, at any rate, the expressions which pious, saintly people use are exaggerated and beyond the truth. Or if they do not think this, at least they think that they themselves could never come to feel it. They think that it would, of course, be very good and very right, but that for themselves it is impossible; so they give it up as a bad case, and come to think it is not their own fault. But if there is a word of truth in what I have been saying—and every word of it, brethren, is founded directly upon the Word of God—it is their own fault. They have not thrown themselves yet with full, unreserved purpose into God's service and worship; therefore they have not begun to taste the freedom and the liberty. They only know the irksomeness of the service, and the restraint of the law; but the freedom and the liberty, and the delight of the freedom and the liberty, are before them, if by God's grace they will take the right way of securing them.

I have spoken so far, brethren, in order to explain the meaning of St. James when he uses those somewhat strange and hard-sounding words, "the law of liberty." Let me now, before I leave off, ask you to

look at the verses in which the expression occurs, that we may understand the full lesson which he intends to teach. "If any man," he says, "be a hearer of the word, and not a doer"—be content to know and hear and talk about God's will and service, without doing it—"he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself for a moment, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." "But whoso *looketh into*"— the words which St. James wrote rather mean, "whoso *stoopeth down and gazeth attentively* into the *perfect law* of *liberty*:" see, he must not take a hasty glance at it, like a man looking at himself in a looking-glass; but he must stoop down and gaze into the *perfect* law, not putting up with half-obedience; *the perfect law*, I say, *of liberty*—such perfect service and obedience as to become true freedom and liberty—"*and continueth therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Yes, brethren, and such a man is blessed in his deed. There is nothing in this world so blessed as the confirmed and well-continued saintliness of a pious man or woman in the Church of Christ, who has tasted the perfect freedom of Christ's service, and who has continued, years and years, gazing into and

obeying the perfect law, which has become to him perfect liberty. His heart has learned to wish no otherwise than God orders. His will is trained to follow and delight in the Will of God. Sorrow may come upon him, as no doubt in the course of years it will, and sickness, and pain perhaps. And these things are naturally grievous to the heart of man, and I do not pretend to say that he will not feel them. But under them all he will be sustained by the blessing of God promised to him, and the sense of the perfect liberty of heart which he has reached. And you will be able to see it. We do see it. We see a good old man, or a good old woman, poor it may be, and bowed down by sickness, yet whose words and whose face show us alike that there is freedom and blessing, freedom and blessing above all price, in the heart within. Or we see young people, children it may be—for children, too, may be taught by the Holy Spirit of God to perfect praise—who are early brought to love the service of God so truly, and to devote themselves so completely to obeying His law, that they have become wiser, happier, and much freer than many of their elders, who still have not learned how true liberty is to be won.

Who would not be like these? Who does not hope to be like such as these, at least before he dies? Oh,

brethren, the time is very short, and none of it, not a day of it, can you afford to lose. Twice in these five days, even in this little village, the bell has tolled for funeral, and we have laid the bodies of two neighbours —one comparatively young, the other not old—in the grave. Do not deceive yourselves. There is but one real sort of liberty. It is not the liberty of doing what we like, and setting at nought the good ways in which our fathers walked, and striking out new paths for ourselves. It is not the fierce liberty which boldly asserts itself against man; it is the gentle liberty which is won before God, by pure and pious living. It is not the liberty which despises law, but the liberty which grows out of law, as the lily flower grows out from among its nursing leaves. Remember the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." Remember, too, I pray you, the great lesson which St. James teaches us in to-day's Epistle, namely, that it is the thorough service of God which alone is perfect freedom; and the obedience to the perfect law of God which alone is true liberty.

Buried with Him in Baptism

COLOSSIANS II.

12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

COLOSSIANS III.

1. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

WE have in some degree, brethren, followed the events of the great Week of the Passion: the Sunday of the lowly procession; the Monday of the many deeds of mercy and power; the Tuesday of the solemn words of parting judgment; the Wednesday of sacred retirement and solitude; the Thursday the day of weakness, desertion, and scattering; the holy Friday of the awful but most blessed Sacrifice; the Saturday of the separation of the body and the soul, when the body lay in the rich man's grave, and the soul went down amid the spirits in the unseen place, and preached to them the fulfilled Sacrifice and the

perfect Atonement which He had wrought for the sons of men. And now we have reached our Easter, our bright, glad feast-day—the day on which it pleased God to raise Him from the grave, to recall His human soul from the place of the departed spirits, and to rejoin it to the body. That body was no longer the body of suffering and weakness that it had been; but it was changed—the same, and yet changed. It was immortal and incorruptible and glorious, instead of mortal and corruptible and dishonoured, as it had been before. I would fain lead you to think of all the events of this great day: the appearance to Mary Magdalene weeping at the tomb; the vision of Angels to St. John and St. Peter; the strange, bewildered feelings of the Twelve (alas! only eleven now), as one after another of the company came in to tell them of some astonishing news of His having been seen, now by the women, now by Simon Peter, now by the two disciples on their sad Sunday walk to Emmaus; and then how, as they thus spake and wondered, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you." But I must leave all these good Easter thoughts to your own consideration, brethren, and occupy myself this evening with one only of the many lessons which the services of the day suggest to us. The Epistle for the day begins

with the first verse of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. But it happens with this passage, as it often happens with the Scripture, broken up as it is for purposes of convenience into short chapters and paragraphs, that the full sense requires us to look further back, and to connect the words of the short piece chosen with other words written in the chapter and paragraph before.

Now, if you look to the second chapter you will see what I mean. St. Paul says in the ninth verse, that all the fulness of God dwells in Christ; then he goes on to say, "And ye are filled full in Him, being buried with Him in your Baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him." "If then ye died with Christ," he goes on to say in the twentieth verse, and "if ye then be risen with Christ," he says in the first verse of the third chapter. In both cases, as you see, he refers to his previous statement, that in our Baptism we were made partakers both of the Death and Resurrection of Christ.

This doctrine, then, brethren, is one which belongs very particularly to Easter Day, the day of the Resurrection; and you see, it is commended to us by the Epistle which we read in the Morning Service. I wish therefore, with the blessing of God, to dwell on it for a while, as suggesting thoughts which are very good for us at this time.

And, first, I wish to observe that people in general, thinking as they do more or less slightly about Baptism, forget very much the way in which Holy Scripture speaks about it. They think it a right thing to have their children baptized, but they are not *very* anxious about it. They do it, but they are not sure that they see much good in it. They do not omit it, but they are not much troubled if they find that it is sometimes forgotten, or neglected, or deferred, so as to be in danger of being forgotten by their neighbours. Now, compare with all this the way in which the Bible speaks. Hear, for instance, what St. Paul says to the Romans: "Know ye not, that all we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His Death? Therefore we were buried with Him through our Baptism into His Death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united to the likeness of His Death, surely we shall be also to the likeness of His Resurrection: knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, in order that we might no longer be in bondage to sin. For he that hath died hath been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

Do just think, brethren, what these great words say, and that not once only, but over and over again. They tell us that in our Baptism we died with Christ, that we were made partakers of His Death, that we were buried with Him, that we became united to the likeness of His Death. Do you think that all these are words only, meaning nothing? And if they mean what they say, is not the meaning very great? Do they not tell us that we were, in Baptism, so completely united and joined to Christ that we actually can be said to have died, been buried, gone down into the grave with Him?

And lest you should think that I am overstraining the words of one passage of the Bible, let me refer you to one or two more. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we so judge, that if one died for all, *then all have died;*" all, that is, have shared His Death, have been buried, have, in virtue of being joined to Christ, gone down with Him into the grave. And so he tells the Colossians in the verses of the text that we are *buried with Christ* in Baptism, using the very same words as those which he uses to the Romans.

Now, let us ask for a few moments, brethren, what these great words mean. For, of course, we did not literally die, nor were we literally buried. Though

Christ died as on Good Friday, and was laid that evening in the rich man's grave, yet we did not literally share either the pangs of the death, or the actual bodily burial.

What does the Apostle mean, then? I apprehend that he means this. We are brought so wonderfully near to Christ by being baptized and made members of His Body, that what is literally true of Him is, in a figure, true of us too; that we actually partake, by the Holy Spirit of God, in Him, and so we have a real share in everything that is His—in His sufferings, in His Death, in His Resurrection, yes, and in being already citizens of Heaven, and sitting with Him in heavenly places.

Men tell us that our natural bodies are all through life undergoing change; that the change, though imperceptible, is always going on so rapidly and so completely that after an interval, say of seven years, there is no single part nor portion of the body which remains what it was seven years before. The gradual change and flux never stops. The man remains the same. The features, the form, the lineaments, the very marks and deformities of the body continually replaced, cause the man to be the same throughout and at every moment, even though everything in him has been thus gradually and imperceptibly altered.

I know not whether it be wholly true or no, but I know that it furnishes an apt illustration of what I am saying. The body of Christ died upon the Cross ages ago; the body of Christ was buried, lay in the grave; but I am part of the Body of Christ. I verily believe that I, my body and soul, have been made part of Him. I was, by Baptism, joined to Him. He has told me so over and over again. What is true of Him is, therefore, true of me. It must be so. I have His word for it. Sin, then, which killed Him, killed us, who are baptized, in Him. Sin, which crucified Him, crucified us who are baptized, and so we have been crucified with Him. Sin, which laid His mortal body in the grave, has made us who are baptized to have gone down into the grave along with Him.

How can we, then, who have thus died to sin, live in sin any longer? How can we who have been reading and hearing and thinking all this week how our Blessed Lord was put to death by sinners, and nailed to the bitter Cross, and laid in the grave,—how can we, I say, sharers as we are by Baptism in all these things, go on sinning?

Brethren, are these thoughts too high and deep for us? Perhaps they are; for our religion is apt to be very shallow indeed, and we shrink from the real depths of Christian doctrine, and fancy we know all

about it when we catch hold of some one doctrine and, holding it very fast, forget all the rest. But for all that, what I say is what Holy Scripture tells us. We have need, I think, to be on our guard, lest, while we profess to venerate the Holy Scriptures, we really set them aside and follow notions of our own instead of those which they teach.

But Holy Scripture, teaching us that in our Baptism we were made partakers of the Death of Christ, tells us also that we are made partakers of His Resurrection too.

As we who have been baptized have died with Him, so we have also risen. As we shared His Death that He died on Good Friday, so we also shared His Resurrection which took place to-day.

Most true. And had we died at once when the blessed Sacrament of Baptism made us members of Christ, then we should surely have found that we were indeed, and for ever, sharers both of the Death and the Resurrection of the Lord. We should, without further risk of loss or failure, passing at once from the font to Paradise, have been dead for ever to sin and risen at once to glory.

But it has not been so with us. God has seen fit to call on us for lives of service. He has allowed us to live on, some of us to grow old, others to look

forward, so far as man can look forward, to years of life and all sorts of toil and labour in His Church upon the earth.

We, then, who died and rose again in Christ at the moment of our Baptisms, according to the lofty teaching of the Apostles, have now got to carry on that dying and that rising again all through our lives, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

Every day of our lives we must die to sin; battling with sin in our secret hearts; putting down and crushing the secret wishes and ideas of sin when, through our own evil or the suggestion of wicked spirits, they are presented to our thoughts; asking the continual help of the Blessed Spirit; keeping on the armour of God; watching in the Spirit; keeping up a constant battle, by night and by day, with the great enemies of our souls—the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Again, we must die to sin daily: confessing before God every day such sins as by our frailty we still commit, and most anxiously asking His forgiveness; resolving to repent and amend our lives, and to render to Him daily something more like acceptable service.

So as children, so as boys, so as young men, so as old men, we must act over and over again that death unto sin which it was allowed us in our Baptisms to share with Christ.

And in like manner we must all our lives long repeat and enlarge, and draw out into Christian habit and the long use of holy living, the rising with Christ which in summary we partook in when we were baptized: working hard and faithfully in our several callings, doing all the good we possibly can to our neighbours, helping on the Kingdom of God in all ways, showing good examples, praying for one another, seeking more and more those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, lifting up our minds to high and heavenly things.

No day so fit, brethren, as to-day for bringing these high thoughts before our minds. For to-day we, with the whole Church of God, celebrate our Blessed Lord's Victory over death and the grave; and to-day a certain number of us have met together, according to His dying command, to feed our souls with the meat and drink indeed of His spiritual Body and Blood.

To those who came in earnest faith, in real charity, and in true repentance, I have no doubt that the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ has renewed, in the best way, the great blessing of their

Baptism; that it has made them assured partakers again, even after such sins and imperfect services as their consciences know of, in the Death of their Lord and in His glorious Resurrection. It has given them fresh help, whereby they may die to sin more in the time that is coming, and may rise more effectually, more confirmedly, and more blessedly to newness of life and greater holiness before God. Among them were several of the newly confirmed. I bless God for it; and pray most earnestly that as they have begun so they may continue, that they may seek for pardon and strength, for nearness to God, and the secret of true devotion, where it is to be found, namely, in this close union with Christ their Divine Lord.

But when, brethren—when will you all come? Shall we ever be allowed to see the day when all who desire to be with Christ and to see salvation will meet at the Altar of God to strengthen and refresh their souls in the way that their dear Lord commanded them? Is it to be for ever that nearly all with one consent shall begin to make excuse? Might not a man win his wife—might not a believing wife win her husband, to come and taste how gracious the Lord is? Might not a father teach his children to prize what he prizes himself? Might not a son or a daughter who knows what it is to have Holy Communion with

their Lord, help—and think what happiness it would be to be allowed to do so!—help to win father or mother to come and do the same?

We must not deceive ourselves. Easter is a blessed time to those who are in faithful earnest. The Resurrection of the Lord is assurance of victory over death and resurrection to eternal life to those who live and die in Christ.

But Easter and the Resurrection of Christ, like all other holy things, have another aspect. For those who welcome them and live according to them, they are full of sacred peace and most holy comfort. For them only. Those who will not repent—who will go on sinning, who hold the truth in a sort of way, but hold it in unrighteousness—to *them*, alas! unless they repent, another Easter and the returning anniversary of the Resurrection are only so many tokens more of the wrath of God and the inevitable Judgment.

Oh, let us all be warned in time! He is very merciful. He has never ceased calling you; He calls you still. But the call will not go on always. May He give us all grace to listen to it before it is too late—before the gate is shut and we are shut out for ever!

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The Waiting Church of the Hundred and Twenty

St. Luke xxiv.

49. *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

LAST Thursday we accompanied, as it were, the Apostles when the Lord led them out from Jerusalem to that part of the Mount of Olives where it began to be called by the name of the neighbouring village of Bethany, where, lifting up His hands in blessing over them, He gradually rose from the earth and was lost to their sight, as a bright cloud after a time intercepted their view. They worshipped Him as He rose from among them; fell on their knees, that is, and adored and prayed to Him with a fervour of faith and devotion, we may well believe, more eager and earnest than they had ever experienced before.

After a time they rose from their knees, and with

great joy returned, we are told, to the city of Jerusalem, a short Sabbath day's journey, to wait,—to wait for they knew not precisely what—for the promise of the Father, for the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, for power from on high.

Ten eager, hopeful, anxious days of solemn, exulting, holy waiting.

The company consisted of the eleven Apostles, the women, Mary the Lord's Mother (the very last time her name is mentioned in Holy Scripture), and His brethren—a company altogether numbering one hundred and twenty names.

They "abode" in *the* upper room—probably, from the insertion of the definite article, the very same upper room furnished, to which they had been directed by the Lord Himself, where they had made ready the Passover six weeks before, and had partaken of the first Blessed Eucharist—yet so "abode" in it as that St. Luke represents them as being "*continually*," "*always*," in the Temple, praising and blessing God; at home, in the upper chamber, continuing in prayer and supplication; in the Temple, joining in the public psalms and worship of praise. It must have been a wonderful time of uncertainty and hopefulness. The great forty days which followed Easter and the Resurrection were over. All those wonderful words

spoken during those days—the very words that form the Charter of the Church of Christ—had been spoken and heard. The breath of Christ, with its wonderful imparted powers of loosing and retaining sins, was upon them. The pastoral commission, the commission to disciple all nations into the triple Name of God and baptize them into it, the prediction of the active and the devotional future of the Church symbolized in St. Peter and St. John,—all this and more was given in words; and they waited for the power from on high—when to come, and how, they knew not—which was to give life to all these great words, and make them mighty and irresistible things.

I must not anticipate to-day the great fulfilment which waits for next Sunday, when Pentecost was fully come, and their eager, uncertain hopefulness was changed into the wonderful and divine reality of the gift of the descending Spirit of God.

To-day we are in the upper chamber, with the eager, anxious, hopeful, uncertain hundred and twenty worshippers; with the eleven, with the women, with Mary the Mother of the Lord, with above one hundred brethren; waiting, praying, supplicating, clinging to the ascended Lord, going to and fro to the Temple services; waiting for we know not exactly what, but surely something very great and very glorious—some-

thing which will not fall short of our brightest imaginations, whatever it may prove to be.

Waiting. It is the characteristic of Christian life in many ways. Ever looking forward, waiting and working, working and waiting, the Christian's mind is always set on a better, happier, more glorious, more heavenly future. Waiting, working, in prayer and supplication, secretly, among the faithful, and in the congregation, waiting to see what greater and better thing God will do, reaching forward to those things that are before, the Christian acknowledges no resting-place, no attainment, no full satisfaction, so long as he remains in the flesh upon the earth.

For these ten days, the Church of the hundred and twenty *waited* for the great gift of the Holy Spirit: and it came, richer, more divine, more full of power from above than they could have imagined.

And then again they waited: waited and worked: each in his place, each in his separate calling, waited, as St. Paul expresses it to the Corinthians, "for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." So St. Paul himself waited, "not as though," he says to the Philippians, "I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:

but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." So the Church ever waited for fresh degrees of grace and glory; so Apostles waited; and we, brethren, inheritors of the same sacred blessings, as many of us as desire to be perfect towards God, must also be thus minded.

For our life is, as I said, one of continual waiting. We wait upon God; we wait upon the Spirit of God; we wait in faith, in patience, in hope, to see what God will do to us and for us.

Think how little we can forecast or foresee the mere outward events which His providence is preparing for us at any time. Changes (chances as they seem, but really orderings of His good and merciful providence), sorrow, bereavement, troubles which, if we could foresee or anticipate them, would cast a shadow almost too deep to be borne over our lives and our homes; does not a Christian live in the continual remembrance, in the constant faith, in the humble yet trustful waiting for what—for whatever—God may be pleased to send him?

It is not mere resignation; it is not the mere lying down, as it were, to meet passively the inevitable stroke—not that; no, it is the active, cheerful *working*,

waiting, of a Christian man trusting in God, trusting in the love of God in Christ, trusting to the supporting gracious work of the Holy Spirit of God, knowing in the bottom of his heart that all things—yes, even the saddest and sorest of earthly troubles and distresses—work together for good, for real, precious, ultimate good, good overflowing with inconceivable abundance, to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose in Jesus Christ.

I do not speak, brethren, of what we are, but of what we ought to be; not of what we really do reach, but what we aspire to reach, and by the grace of God may come to reach more and more; and I say that in all real troubles and sorrows God is very near us, nearer, if I may venture to say it, than at other times. The very cloud that shades the sky is full of gracious rain. Our Pentecost is, as it were, close upon us, with unusual fulness of blessing.

What I say of outward sorrow is not less true of many other things, in which, perhaps, we do not think so much of it. For instance, in regard to our own growth in grace and spiritual improvement. We cannot take Heaven, as it were, by storm, nor by any paroxysms of devotion force the working of the Almighty Spirit to keep pace, so to speak, with our own impatient will. Nor can we measure His sacred

work accurately and consciously within our souls, feeling, as it were, the pulse of our spirits, and registering the progress that they make in the divine work of sanctification. Men are tempted sometimes to wish for such things, and to try to do them. But the wish and the attempt are alike mistaken and mischievous.

No; the Christian man must work and wait. He must possess his soul in patience, content with such a measure of sensible comfort as the Lord may be pleased to give him, not discouraged though it be less than he would fain crave; he must be unfailing in his prayers and supplications, constant and humble in his watchful guard over his own heart and life, and he must leave the result in the hands of God. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." And so must we, who thankfully believe ourselves to be born of the Spirit, wait upon the Spirit. He will come in due time—in his own time; we must pray and work and wait, and the blessing (not withheld, even when we are not conscious of it) will come richly on us at last if we faint not.

So, again, of spiritual works—the clergyman in his parish, the parent with his children. Men are very apt to forget the great lesson of spiritual patience,

and to look for fruits and effects of their work on calculations of their own, and to forget that God operateth in His own secret way, and that their part is to work, and wait, and pray, and trust Him Who is faithful to bless, as He will, and when He will, their honest and earnest devotion.

For, in truth—and this is indeed the lesson which I desire to draw from the picture of the waiting Church, the Church of the hundred and twenty, waiting as to-day for the promise of the Father—we must in all our Christian life realize the fact of the secret, unsearchable ways of the Holy Spirit of the Most High God, in Whom alone we have our trust and hope. He is above us, round us, in us; but we must not presume. He is our only strength, but we must work as if we had strength of our own. He will surely support and comfort us, according to our needs; but He knows better than we do what our real needs are, and what are the best ways and the best times of giving us that support and comfort. We must learn to feel ourselves relying on a strength which we do not feel, assured of a Presence which we do not see, receiving blessing even when our imagination hardly knows how to realize it, walking in the immediate sight and in the grace of the Most High God, even when the outward appearance of things and the

current opinions of mankind give but little clear and undesirable proof of the mighty superhuman agency which we believe and trust in. We must neither, on the one hand, presume upon it, nor, on the other, doubt or deny it. Our walk through life must be the wary, working, waiting, praying walk of humble, earnest faith, neither craving more visible, sensible helps of God and proofs of His presence and grace than He is pleased to give, nor—God forbid—doubting that He is with us in Christ, among us, watching, seeing, knowing, sanctifying, helping us to grow, even invisibly to our own sense and consciousness, into some greater fitness for the Kingdom to which ere long it is His purpose to translate us.

This is the frame of mind which it is our Christian wisdom and duty to cultivate. Time goes on, and we feel little change as it goes. We cannot identify or watch to any purpose the secret maturing of our souls. We do worse than waste our time if we endeavour to do so. But our souls are growing in some way, though we do not feel it. If we are working, waiting upon God, praying,—then, little as we may be aware of it, they *are* growing towards God and Heaven. I think it is to little purpose to try, as we are sometimes bidden to do, to take stock, as it were, of our Christian faith and feeling, and ask

ourselves whether we have grown in these things, say in the last month or year. It is better to work on and pray, and wait God's good time. We should be liable to make great mistakes, and mistakes on both sides. Some would probably be too well satisfied with themselves, and liable to presume upon the favour and nearness of God more than they had a right to; others, many, I think, and they by no means always the least worthy or spiritual, would be very apt to feel distressed and almost despairing, while they honestly could not satisfy themselves that signs of strengthening grace and unmistakable tokens of greater spiritual progress were to be recognized in their consciousness. No; this is not wise nor good. Self-examination should not become self-contemplation. Self-examination means the searching into our sins and confessing them, not the analyzing of our secret souls. No. The wise, Christian life is one of simplicity, trust, patience, work. "In patience possess ye your souls:" doing day by day the work of the day, constant and instant in prayer, watchful of sin, keeping guard over the lips and the thoughts, living on and drawing daily nearer to the end in tranquil, peaceful, faithful dependence on Him Whose special manifestations of grace and comfort are given or withheld, as He sees best and fittest.

And the end approaches, and may be to any one of us ever so near. We know it; we are not dismayed to know it. The end may come with notice—notice, I mean, of more or less gradual approach—or it may come in a moment.

Anyway, to those who live thus in the Christian simplicity of humble and waiting faith, it will be well.

Let God do as is right in His eyes. We do not forecast, we cannot foresee. We have no choice, nor, if we are wise, any wish. We desire to keep the mind of the waiting Church of the hundred and twenty Saints: to be ready to meet the will of God, whatever it be, with patient, willing, thankful souls; trusting, hoping, waiting, working; knowing well that if we be found so, the mighty love and mercy of God will break upon us at the last with such infinite and inexpressible blessing, as passes all conception or understanding in this present world.

Whitsunday. I will not leave you Comfortless.

ST. JOHN XIV.

18. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*
19. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*
20. *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

IT must have been a very sad and trying thing for the Apostles and their company of faithful disciples, to be told by their Lord that He was on the point of going away from them. For three years and a half, as nearly as we can judge, He had been with them, teaching, comforting, and helping them. In poverty, indeed, and wandering, not knowing where to lay His head; but doing deeds of wonderful and Divine mercy in their sight continually, and speaking words (some of which only are recorded in the Books of Holy Scripture) which must have made their hearts burn a thousand times within

them with admiration and love. He had been to them inconceivably great, precious, and dear. Consider for a moment what an immense difference those three years and a half must have made to them. Three years and a half ago, they were mere fishermen on the lake, ordinary peasants of Galilee; and now, after this blessed and wonderful companionship, what were they? What were they not? Still unstable, no doubt; still in great degree ignorant; still liable to be frightened and fall away; still under the dominion of various mistakes and prejudices; but, for all that, ready in heart to become within a few days receivers of the blessed gift of the Holy Ghost to be poured out upon them when the first great Whitsunday came, and to be the human channels through which that Divine gift was to be handed on to all the innumerable multitudes who were to be received into the ark of Christ's Church to the end of the world. So moulded in heart, so moulded by faith, so wrought upon by the grace of Him with Whom they companied, so brought near to the Divine likeness—*all but one;* for hidden unbelief made *one* incapable of the sacred assimilation which wrought upon the other eleven.

The Lord, I say, told them over and over again in that last week that He was going, that it was

good for them that He should go; but, with that tender love and compassion which characterized everything that He said, He assured them at the same time that He would not leave them *orphans*. He would send them another Comforter—not one to come for a year or two and then go away, but One who should abide with them for ever, "even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

I suppose that the minds of the Apostles must have been strangely agitated during the days of waiting. Comforted inexpressibly by the Resurrection, and by all the words of love and power which the risen Lord spoke to them during the forty days which followed after the Resurrection,—during which time He delivered to them the outlines of the Church, the Kingdom of God so soon to be established on the earth,—they had seen Him with their own eyes gradually rise towards Heaven from the Mount of Olives till a cloud had hidden Him from their sight; and now they waited, in wonderful hope, mixed, no doubt, with strange fear, for the promise of the Father—power from on high—which not many days after was to be given them.

No doubt they met every day, secretly, however,

for fear of the Jews; in one of the chambers, it is probable, which communicated with the Temple. No doubt they were continually in prayer, none absent, not knowing how or when the great gift was to come, or in what form or shape it was coming, not doubting that they should know it well when it came, and that it would certainly be something very great and very precious. Ten days they waited; ten suns rose and set, and yet nothing came. They were not idle in those days; for, whether wisely or not I cannot tell, they resolved to elect a twelfth Apostle in the place of the traitor Judas, and chose St. Matthias;—a step never repeated again. And then at last, on the morning of the Day of Pentecost, on the first great Whitsunday, the Divine Gift came. A sudden sound from Heaven as of a mighty rushing wind. It filled all the place where they were sitting. And twelve tongues as of fire were seen to come down, and, without burning or sense of physical heat, to rest upon the heads of the twelve. Thus outwardly and inwardly they were filled with the Divine power of the Holy Ghost. Forthwith one wonderful power began to show itself. For, whereas there were assembled in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost Jews born and living in foreign countries to an immense distance north, south, east, and west of Jerusalem, the Apostles,

though unlearned and untaught men, were able to speak to them all, and tell them the whole story of the wonderful works of God, of the miracles and sayings of Christ, of His Resurrection and His Ascension, in their own languages.

Now, brethren, consider, I pray you, with some attention the significancy of this great event which happened as upon this morning. All that God had done in former times, from the very beginning—the call of Abraham, the Law of Moses, the mission of the prophets, the selection of the chosen people and their separation from the other nations of the earth in the Holy Land, their captivity and their return—had been done with a view to this great event. The coming of our Blessed Lord Himself, His wonderful Birth, His Life, His Miracles, His Discourses, His Death upon the Cross, His Resurrection from the grave, His Ascension into Heaven,—all these great and precious things took place with a view to this great event. Till all this was done, till Jesus was glorified, and till He went away in the flesh, this, the crowning event of all, could not be. All these things were done,—the whole course of God's government, and all the acts of the Lord were done, in order that the Church of God should be established, and men brought by it to grace and salvation. But till the

Holy Ghost came down on Whitsunday morning, the Church had not begun to be. All was prepared, all was ready. Two thousand years of preparation, with all the great things that happened in them, were past; and then, on that morning, about nine o'clock as this day, brethren, there came down, as we read, upon the heads of those twelve men, twelve tongues of fire, twelve bright, calm, steady flames, and they *sat*, stayed—did not shine a moment and go out, but stayed,—clear, harmless but searching, holy fire, upon the heads of the twelve.

Now I say that in those twelve flames that sat upon the heads of those twelve men, the Church of God was finally set up and established upon the earth, never to be destroyed. In those twelve flames the work, rooting itself back into two thousand years of history, was completed, and the Church of God, the Temple, the Ark of Salvation, was fully given, into which men and women were to be brought to receive the Holy Ghost, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost to be saved to eternal life.

Let us pause here a moment, brethren, and dwell upon this thought a little further.

At that moment the Church of God consisted of twelve men only; for the Church of God is bounded by the Holy Spirit of God; and where the Holy Spirit

is there is the Church, and where the Church is there is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, therefore, being given, visibly and by those tongues of flame, to twelve, those twelve were the whole Church of God.

But it is the very characteristic of the Holy Spirit, and therefore of the Church, to be *diffusive*. It cannot be stopped or stayed. It will not be content, it cannot be content to be still, and not continually enlarge its borders. It must spread. It must, in proportion as it is living and filled with the Spirit—it must, I say, be eager and earnest to spread. And so it began to spread instantly. Peter, speaking in the name of the twelve, preached at once; and the people, pricked in their heart at his words, cried unto him and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And they came as they were bidden—came in crowds, came to ask for that blessed Baptism; so that before the sun went down on that great first Whitsunday, each of the twelve had baptized not less than two hundred and fifty men and women, and there were added unto the Church three thousand souls.

At nine o'clock that morning, the Church of God in

which the Holy Spirit dwelt numbered twelve men: by sun-down the Church of God in which the Holy Spirit dwelt might be counted by thousands.

Trace the subject a little further in the history of the Acts of the Apostles. You find, first, that the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. Then, two chapters after, that the number of the men (whether including the original three thousand or no, we cannot say for certain) was about *five* thousand. And so it goes on:—a great company of the Jewish priests are obedient to the faith. The Apostles at Jerusalem, Philip the Deacon at Samaria, St. Paul and St. Barnabas over a vast extent of distant countries, St. Peter at Cæsarea, Lydda, and Joppa, spread far and wide the teaching of the Redeemer, and admit by Holy Baptism the penitent and believing people into the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

And so, brethren, it has been from that day to this. The Church has gone on, sometimes more prosperously, sometimes less; sometimes full of faith and earnestness, sometimes less so; sometimes opposed and persecuted by the powers of the world, sometimes (and with hardly less injury) flattered by them; sometimes actively spreading the Truth among the heathen, and deepening the hold of Truth among the people

at home, sometimes falling more or less into slumber and neglecting such works; yet in all time the case has been so far the same that the Holy Spirit of God has dwelt, as He will ever dwell till this world is done, in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints. In that Holy Church we the Clergy, by direct commission from the Apostles, teach, baptize, administer the Holy Communion, warn the people of their great Gift, and of the shortness of life, and of the near and inevitable approach of death and judgment. In that Holy Church you the lay people, admitted by Holy Baptism, taught the long descended truth of God, and fed by the blessed spiritual food of the Body and Blood of Christ, drink freely of the living waters of the Holy Spirit which flow, according to the sacred promise of the Lord, in that channel. The very same Spirit whose fiery flame sat upon the twelve Apostles, and whose indwelling filled their hearts, is still our only strength, our only holiness, and our only hope. If any of us should not have—or, having had, should lose by heavy, unrepented sin—the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His. Christ only recognizes those in whom His Spirit dwells. The Advocate in heaven knows nothing of any prayers save those which the Holy Spirit, the Advocate in the hearts of men, inspires. And, so far as the promise

and the Word teach us, it is in the Holy Church only that that Holy Spirit is given. . .

Brethren, the doctrine of this day is one of the most practical kind. It goes home to the separate heart and conscience of each single one among us. For baptized into the Church of God, made members of His Church, we each of us received the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit, and in the continued possession of that blessed gift lies all our hope, whether of continuing to be the children of God, or of entering at the last into the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not a matter of words, or talk only, or argument; it is matter of the deepest and most vital reality. In the heart of each one among us that holy spark has once been lighted; and it rests with us, with our earnest and true prayers, with our real and true devotion, with our true and unfeigned penitence, to make the calling and election so given sure. That Holy Spirit has been with us, suggesting good thoughts, ready to breathe in our hearts with the breath of good prayers, more than willing to sanctify us to every sort of good word and work,—all our lives. He has known—known in all its particulars—the separate tale of each Christian soul from the beginning. He has taken account of our childhood, of the wilfulness of our boyhood, of the wanderings

and sins of our youth, of all the various windings and secret ways of the heart of our manhood. Nothing is hidden from Him: nothing mistaken by Him. We are utterly open, utterly visible to His searching sight.

And being thus open, being thus visible, *where*, think you, do we stand—*how* do we stand before Him?

Can we bear to think of ourselves in this light? can we bear to think of the easy, self-complacent way in which we are too apt to live, when we remember the searching Spirit, the undeceived Spirit, the most holy and pure Spirit Who dwelleth, unless we be reprobates, with our spirits?

Is it not a proof of mercy unspeakable that He has not long since disowned us and cast us away?

And yet He spares us; spares us to hear and to think; spares us to turn, if we will, and be turned; spares us that we may repent and believe, and, yielding ourselves up to Him in body and soul, may be saved at the last.

Oh, holy, pure, and perfect Spirit! Do Thou, of Thy unwearied goodness and love, touch our hearts that we may even now, even at the last, render them wholly to Thee. Give us true repentance of our sins. Give us true faith. Give us holy pureness of body

and soul. Give us faithful lives. Give us this day especially Thy help: that, coming to the Blessed Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, we may be so filled with Thy grace, that we may serve God in our bodies, souls, and spirits with better and holier service, every day we live.

Walking after the Spirit

ROMANS VIII.

1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

IN speaking to you this morning, brethren, I spoke chiefly of the first great Whitsunday, the Birthday of the Church of God: showing how, for two thousand years, ever since the days of Abraham, the preparation for that Birthday had begun, and pointing out how, as the Church began on that day, so it has continued ever since, and so it will go on to the end of the world, when He Who went away that it might have its beginning will come again to bring it to its end.

This evening I propose, with the help of God, to come nearer home, and take a part of the subject which belongs more closely yet to our own selves.

It is, no doubt, a very great thing indeed that the Church of God was thus founded, and a very great

thing indeed for us that, having been born in a Christian country and the children of Christian parents, we were early made Christians by being baptized, just as the three thousand people of whom we spoke this morning were baptized on the first great Whitsunday. It is indeed a very great thing, and one about which we cannot possibly say more than the truth, or be too grateful to the mercy of God, Who has given us so great a blessing.

But what good will it be to us that the Church was born on Whitsunday, or that we were baptized when we were children, and so made members of Christ and partakers of the Holy Ghost, if at the last we are found to have grieved the Holy Ghost by sinful impenitent lives, so that He should have departed from us? What good will it do us to have been once planted into Christ if we transplant ourselves, and put ourselves out of the working of the Holy Ghost, Who is our only strength and salvation? For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. He may be rich, or proud, or looked up to by men, or what you please; but if he has not the Spirit of Christ, he is really most poor, most abject, most miserable.

Therefore, brethren, it concerns every one of us in the very highest degree to come to some reasonable

assurance that the Holy Spirit into which we were once baptized is ours still. Reasonable assurance, I say; not fancy, not enthusiasm, not ignorant and groundless but reasonable assurance—assurance upon reasonable grounds, such assurance as we could explain to another person, and from which, when we are ourselves in trouble or sorrow, or at the point of death, we could take reasonable and real comfort in ourselves.

This is the subject to which I invite your attention this evening: and I think every one must see that it is one of the nearest and most real importance to the true comfort and happiness of every single person here present.

Brethren, I will give you three or four rules by which you will be able to come to such a reasonable assurance as I speak of, and they shall all be directly founded upon the Word of God written in Holy Scripture.

1. First, do you believe in the sacred Truth of God: of God the Father Who made you and all the world, of God the Son Who redeemed you and all mankind, and God the Holy Ghost Who sanctifieth you and all the elect people of God?

Well, I suppose all Christian people would answer cheerfully to this question. They would say cheer-

fully, as the godfathers and godmothers say at the Baptism of a child, "All this I stedfastly believe."

2. Then, as you believe in God the Father, do you worship Him continually, frequenting His house of prayer, joining in hymns of praise to Him, addressing Him with the love that belongs to a father, and the reverence due to a Father Which is in Heaven? Do you never offend Him by taking His Holy Name in vain, either in loose talking, or saying good words when your heart is not going along with your tongue? Do you keep the holy rest of this holy day, and by good reading and careful thinking try to keep up the thought of your being, in Christ, a son of that most Holy and Righteous Father?

3. Then, as you believe in God the Son, do you really trust with all your heart and soul in His most precious Redemption, keeping up in your heart the memory of His Cross and Passion, remembering that He is among us when we meet to pray, never omitting an opportunity of strengthening and refreshing your soul by the spiritual food of His Body and Blood, according to His own dying words, when He bade you do it in remembrance of Him till His coming again?

4. Then, as you believe in God the Holy Ghost, do you pray continually for the increase of His help and strength, knowing that as certainly as a kind earthly

father gives good gifts unto his own children, so certainly our Heavenly Father giveth His Holy Spirit to those that ask Him? Do you keep your heart clear of all malicious thoughts, and all lustful thoughts, and all dishonest and rebellious thoughts, lest such things should operate (as they certainly would if they were not repented of and amended) to drive the Holy Spirit of God from your souls?

See, the first great question runs into a great many points; and very, very happy are they who can in any considerable degree answer to these things with a safe conscience, and feel with reasonable assurance, so far, that they are led by the Spirit of God.

But, brethren, I must go further yet; for St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians, gives us a number of signs by which we may distinguish the works of the Spirit from the works of the flesh, and so gives us great help towards determining what we want to know. "Now the works of the flesh," he says, "are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like;" "but the fruit of the Spirit," he goes on to say, "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Does any man or woman desire to know whether the Holy Spirit, Whose help and indwelling were given to him when first he was received into the Church of Christ, is still his? Let them try themselves by this rule. By their fruits they shall know themselves. Do they show any of these foul marks of the victory of the flesh? Or, do they really show in all their daily lives these sweet fruits of the Spirit, victorious and ruling in their hearts? Has love conquered all hatred and reviling? has peace conquered all variance and emulation? has long-suffering and gentleness overcome all strife? has goodness, has faith conquered all tendency to heresy? has meekness —Christian meekness—prevailed over all sedition and pride and self-assertion? has Christian temperance gained a perfect victory over revellings, and drunkenness, and lasciviousness, and all uncleanness? Does their life, from morning till evening, from evening till morning, from year to year, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age, show the unfailing marks of the ruling Spirit of the Most High God, sanctifying and making it holy in its most inward and secret being?

Brethren, I have not put the case one-half so strongly as it might be put; and yet is there not, even in the case as I have stated it, enough to make

most of us—might I not say all of us?—tremble to think how far we have fallen away from the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, and how small and feeble and occasional, even if they be any at all, are the signs we show that the Blessed Spirit of God is really gaining the mastery in our hearts, and that we are yielding ourselves up to the entire dominion of Him in Whom is our only possible hope of seeing the Lord and reaching Heaven when we die? Which of us could stand St. Paul's test? Which of us, conscious of innumerable sins and offences of thought, word, and deed, could venture to say and feel, "Yes, my heart condemns me not. I do see the signs, I do feel the working of the victorious Spirit within me?"

But thanks, deep and heartfelt thanks, to our most merciful Father! He spares us still. He spares us to repent. However far we may have strayed, however we may have sinned and fallen away before, yet He shows us all this forbearance and long-suffering in order to lead us to repentance. He leaves us here, even while He is daily calling others away from our side, and summoning them to His Presence, for this very purpose, for this very most merciful purpose—that even yet we may repent of our sins and confess them before Him in earnest

prayer for pardon, and confessing them may be forgiven for the Blessed Lord's sake, and even yet grow in the grace of the Holy Ghost, and become in some degree fitted for the Heavenly Kingdom before we die.

But, brethren, we must repent in earnest. We must turn away from our sins. We must become used to hearty, real, constant prayers. We may not omit the Holy Communion, which the Lord Himself has enjoined upon us.

Can you think that a man may go on neglecting such things, thinking himself as good as his neighbours, letting days and months and years slip by without earnest religion, growing older and older and no better,—and yet be safe before God, and ready, should it please Him to send a sudden and unexpected summons, to pass into His presence? Will the Holy Spirit, think you, dwell on in the heart that constantly grieves Him by neglect, to say no more? Will He be satisfied with the lame and impotent excuses which men or women make for delaying the real turning to God—the real and sacred preparation for their end? Oh, my brethren, believe me, it is this sort of neglectfulness and folly in the days of health and strength which sets people on catching at all sorts of groundless and deceitful

helps in the time of sickness and terror. As foolish people, neglecting to attend to their bodily health, when sudden pains and fears come on them are apt to resort to any ignorant pretender in medicine who promises to work a cure upon them, so are the people who live negligent and irreligious lives the very first to be the victims of those pretenders in religion, who offer them hope and comfort at the last, without basing that hope and comfort on the only true ground—the ground of repentance from sin, with firm purpose of amendment of life, and an earnest faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in His Church.

God forbid that I should seem to discourage even the latest, even the very latest turn of the sinner's heart in prayer to the God Whom he has neglected before. Better, far better, the last feeble cry for mercy, the last languid effort of repentance, the last weak clutch of faith in Christ, than none at all. But, oh, brethren, do not put your trust in so frail, so uncertain a hope as this. Does not death often come suddenly? Does it not come in distracting pain sometimes, in stupor, in wandering of mind?

Oh, my dear friends, do not, for Christ's sake, Who redeemed you and loved you—do not trust to so frail a hope as this. Do not trust that He Whom you go

on tempting by refusing to listen to His Voice in the days of your health and strength, will certainly give you the chance (and the clear heart and will to take advantage of the chance) of so late and tardy and feeble turning to Him at the last moment!

Believe me, the Holy Spirit of God, into Whose blessed Indwelling we were baptized, waits throughout all your life graciously, mercifully, with unspeakable long-suffering and forbearance, desiring you to listen to His secret whisperings, to turn to God, to be holy, and to be happy. He knows every secret of your heart, every turning and winding of your thoughts, and of your wishes. No tricks or devices of yours can baffle or deceive him. There, in the deep of your heart, He must gain the victory. It must be gained separately and singly for each separate and single soul. There, in the deep of your heart, where no man can penetrate or see, you are face to face with the Holy Spirit. He penetrates. He sees. And He will have you, in the days of your strength, turn to Him really and be sanctified. For the sake of God; for the Father's sake, Who prepared all these great things for you from the most distant ages; for the Son's sake, Who took man's nature for you, and in it for you lived, died, rose again, and ascended; for the Holy Ghost's sake,

Who has admitted you into the Church of God, and therein gives you the fullest means of making your blessed calling and election sure; for your own sake; for your neighbours' sake; for your children's sake, if you be the parent of children;—turn to God now in the days of your strength, and serve Him with true devotion—real devotion of your bodies and your souls. You have His holy written Word: study it continually. You have your good Prayer-book, full of the very words with which God's people have worshipped Him in the Church from the beginning; you have your Church, which, if it please God, we will shortly open for daily prayers; you have continual Communions, at which I trust we may gradually meet a larger and larger company of earnest worshippers; you have your right of approaching God in your own private and family prayers. What could God have done more for His vineyard? what is there more which He could have done for you? What lacketh yet? Alas! the wilful inner heart, the mind of the flesh, the rebel spirit within us, too often leads us to pass by all these things as though they were not, and either to trust in what has no help in it, or not to think of such things at all. But shall we not awake? Shall we not listen? Shall the pleading of the Holy Ghost ever fall upon deaf

ears and slumbering hearts? Surely, no. There are, I know, among us many who, though they dare not *claim* the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, yet do, in humble, earnest devotion, seek after it; who pray; who communicate; who try secretly by His grace to govern their souls within, and to render Him a better and a better service as long as they live. May the blessing of Almighty God be with them. And it will be with them—the blessing which began as on this day, and will never end while the world lasts. And may we all learn to be like them—to turn to God in time, to taste of the heavenly gift, to be partakers of the Holy Ghost and the powers of the world to come, to render up our secret hearts in true repentance and real devotion to His sanctifying grace.

And may it please Him so to visit us all with His mighty power, which alone can quicken and effectually move our weak and wilful hearts, that we all, young and old, may turn to Him and be turned in the days of our health and strength, so that at the last (that *last* that may be ever so near to us) we may be received into the Eternal Kingdom, acknowledged as living stones of the mighty temple which the Holy Ghost sanctifieth, and wherein the Lord Himself walketh.

The Barren Fig Tree

St. Mark xi.

12. *And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:*
13. *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*
14. *And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.*

THIS is one of the incidents of the week of the Lord's Passion. You may remember that during the early days of that week He went to and fro from Bethany, where He abode in the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, to Jerusalem: coming in each morning from thence, and returning thither, after the sacred work of the day was done, on each evening.

This particular incident took place on the Monday morning; and, as no doubt you recollect, on the Tuesday morning the disciples called the Lord's attention to the same tree, which the terrible efficacy

of His curse on the day before had withered from the roots.

Those who read this remarkable story in the English Bible are apt sometimes to be puzzled by it, owing to a slight mistranslation of the original words. It seems to need some explanation why, if it was not yet time for figs, the Lord should have shown this disappointment (so to call it) and displeasure with the tree. Who, we are disposed to ask, finds fault with a tree for not bearing fruit, or for not bearing ripe fruit, if it be not yet time for fruit, or for the fruit to be ripe? Who would complain at finding nothing but leaves, if it were still only the time for leaves, and the time for the fruit were not yet come?

But the truth is that the little word "*yet*" is not in the original, and has been unfortunately and mistakenly introduced into the English; and this it is which leads to the apparent difficulty which most careful readers have felt in understanding the full drift and meaning of this occurrence. For it is really very full of meaning, and of very important meaning.

The case seems to be really like this. The fig tree in those countries produces, usually, its fruit first, and after the fruit its leaves. In general, the early fruit does not ripen till towards the end of April.

It was in the latter days of March that the Lord and His disciples were walking early in the morning from Bethany to Jerusalem, and as He walked, and was hungry, He saw at some distance from the path on which they were walking a wild fig tree full of leaves. It was an unusual sight at that season. It was not the time yet for figs, much less for leaves; and here was a tree in full leaf. Ordinarily, you might take it for granted that where a tree was in full leaf there you would certainly find figs full ripe among the leaves; and if this had been an ordinary case, it would only have shown that (whether from being more sheltered than common, or from the soil being richer or more favourable than common) the tree was a very forward one.

But when they reached it, they found that, though very full of leaves, there was not a fig to be found upon it. It had got the *show*, but it had none of the *reality;* it had got all the look, but none of the substance; all that ought to follow, but none of that which ought to come first.

When, then, the Lord pronounced His curse upon the barren fig tree, He taught men a great lesson by an acted parable.

It was not about fig trees that He really spake. Doth the Lord take care for fig trees? Or saith He

it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; and the lesson that it teaches is that what He requires of His people is reality, not profession; truth in the inward heart, not outward appearance of goodness; not a fair show which man can see, while God sees that the inside is very different from that show; fruit—the real fruit of true holiness and inward devotion to God—not leaves; not the semblance and reputation and outward character only, without any corresponding clinging of the heart in faith and good works to God.

Now there can be no doubt that the first application of this very significant act of our Lord was to the Jewish nation.

It was like a fair-looking fig tree, full of leaves. The hill of Sion was a fair place, and the joy of the whole nation. A magnificent Temple, thronging worshippers, great gifts, large subscriptions (many that were rich throwing in much), sacrifices going on continually, a people having a great zeal of God, great washings of hands before meals, and of brazen vessels and tables, and a treasury full of corbans. How full of fine leaves that great fig tree looked! How pleased must have been Pharisee, or Herodian, or Sadducee to see it all, and think what a flourishing, zealous, religious nation he belonged to; how high

they all stood in God's favour, how vastly they were ahead of all the other nations of the earth!

Leaves! But there came One Who, seeing afar this fine-looking tree having such a profusion of leaves, came nearer if haply He might find the fruit thereon, which those leaves should have indicated. Alas for the nation! The Temple was doomed; not one stone, ere fifty years had passed, should be left standing on another. Traditions in plenty, but the word and commandment of God made of none effect by these traditions; long prayers for pretence, tithings of mint, anise, and cummin given regularly, while judgment, justice, and the love of God were all forgotten; extortion, and excess:—under all those thick, fine, flourishing leaves not a single fruit to be found; no faith, no love, no Divine knowledge, no real understanding of the Scriptures, nor of the Prophets, read in their synagogues every Sabbath-day; a vail upon the hearts of the people, so that with all their seeing they could not see, and with all their hearing they could not hear!

This, I say, brethren, is undoubtedly the first application of our Lord's acted parable. And very strong and clear is the application which it bears, as thus explained, to our own Church of England, and very much it concerns all the members of that Church to

remember it. For we, too, are apt to be very proud, and to say very great things of our National Church; so pure as we think it in doctrine, so apostolical in discipline, so firmly established in the hearts of the people and in the laws of the land, so full of missionary enterprise and exertion, so full of all sorts of deeds of love and charity. Yes, no doubt, there is much to be very thankful for, much to love, much to show; but how much of all this is *leaves!*

Perhaps, brethren, this part of the subject may not seem to be so well fitted for a little country parish, as it would be if it were addressed to a great congregation of the powerful and wealthy people of the land; but, really, it is not unfitted even for us, though we be few and distant, and without much visible power or influence with others. For we, even we, form a real part of the Church of our country, and contribute strength to it, or weakness, according as we—even we, in our little parish of six hundred people—are faithful and true, or the reverse. If we are broken up into parties and sects, if we are neglectful of Church and Communion, if habits of idleness, or unchastity, or intemperance prevail among us—we add nothing but weakness and danger to the cause of the Church of Christ in the whole country. If we be such, then, so far as we go, our national tree is all leaves and no

fruit, full of decay, and destined to inevitable ruin; whereas if we, even we, are united and faithful, meeting here in prayers and sacred Communions, united in love and charity and good works, sober, watchful in prayer, chaste, well-conducted Christian people in our families, training up our children, our boys and girls, in habits of industry and in the ways of faith and holiness,—then we are a distinct and by no means a powerless element of strength and safety to the Church of Christ as planted in our land. In that case, one branch at least, though it be but a small one, is a fruit-bearing branch, and does not cumber the ground, nor incur the terrible penalty of that withering which the Lord pronounced against the barren fig tree.

But I will not dwell on this part of the subject, though, as I said, it is the first application of the Lord's acted parable, and one that is not without considerable interest to ourselves.

But the case of the barren fig tree applies to individual people as well as to Churches. We, too, each one of us separately, have to look to it very seriously, as in the sight of God, that our religion be not fair-seeming leaves only, but fruit too; not only outward show, but true, earnest, inward reality.

The lesson comes very closely home to any one who

will consider it honestly. Does it not, think you, come very near to a clergyman, bound as he is to keep up the character which belongs to his profession and duties, and yet very conscious of his own weakness and liability to sin, lest he should be allowing an outward seeming of holiness to be connected with an inward unholiness of heart, which none knows of but himself? Has he not, think you, to watch himself very narrowly, lest a fair outward show should, in the sight of God, be "leaves" only, well-looking leaves, while as God sees there is no real fruit there?

Take, again, the case of a parent, seeming, and intending to seem, to his children's eyes good and religious, telling them to be good and pious, giving them all sorts of good advice and the like. Should he not think carefully with himself how *he* stands in the sight of God, Who knows and judges of the heart? Is all this fair-seeming "leaves" only? It would be very sad and very fatal if it were so.

Take, again, the ordinary case of men leading fair outward lives—the respectable and respected men of a town or village—forward to support good things, well thought of, professing to be religious, attending, it may be, church, and, generally speaking, bearing the outward appearance of good Christian people. All this is very good, if there be true inward holiness

as well; if the secret heart, which God sees and judges, be really with God; if in private prayers he be very earnest and true; if he is laying his sins continually before God, and praying for His pardoning and sanctifying Spirit; if he is really walking with God, and holding inward communion with Him in Christ; if he is watching his own heart, denying himself in things that his natural desires would like, and really rendering to God the secret devotion of a truly religious soul. Then all this is *very good.* His light is shining before men, and they see His good works, and glorify their Father Which is in Heaven. But what if all this fair outside be *not* accompanied with these inward things? What if the "leaves" only be there, and the real "fruit" wanting? Could anything be more sad and miserable than *that?*

I might go on with other instances: young people, for instance, showing early leaves of promise of religion and piety, and then forgetting more or less the real and serious fruits which these leaves seem to promise.

But there is no need to specify further. The general lesson is a very intelligible and a very serious one, and there is not one among us who ought not to lay it to heart very carefully. It is the lesson of the fatal danger of outward profession and inward

hollowness—seeming better than we are, being content to be thought and to look good, while we are not really trying to be thoroughly and really good in secret. Sometimes people who are in earnest are apt to be tempted the other way, and to think that they ought not to *seem good*. Being painfully conscious that they are not really as good as other people think them, they try rather to depreciate themselves and seem worse, or at least not to try to seem good. But this is a sad mistake. They ought rather to *be* better, not to *seem* worse. They ought rather to try to bring their inward selves up to their outward seeming, not to bring down their outward seeming to what they think of their inward selves. God knows, we cannot spare the testimony to religion and holiness which we get from the outwardly good and Christian lives that, more or less, we see round us, even though some of those people may be (as no doubt they are) painfully conscious that they do not deserve all the good that is thought of them. Oh no, let us rather, each of us, take into our own hearts the Lord's sacred lesson, and try for ourselves to bring our true and real inward devotion up to the high mark which Christ does really require of His faithful servants.

Believe me, no good Christian can be well satisfied with himself. He knows too well what his Lord

requires, and he knows much too well how lamentably short he falls of reaching that high and holy standard, to make it possible for him to feel contented or easy with his own life and mind.

But he must work on and pray. He must, in the secrecy of his own heart, and in the privacy of his own prayers, learn to walk with God. He must ask of Him Who never refused and never can refuse to hear the earnest prayer of a Christian, His pardoning and sanctifying Spirit. With the aid of this Blessed Spirit, he must put down and mortify his own worldly and carnal lusts.

If ever he feels or fears that his outward seeming and credit among men is greater than he deserves, he must work all the more in this secret work of prayer and holy devotion.

But God forbid that he should be satisfied with himself. God forbid that he should rest in the consciousness that, in the sight of men or in his own overweening thought, he puts out fair "leaves" and a good show; when, in fact, and as God sees him, there is no fruit of holy, humble, self-distrusting love; no good fruit of that sacred Fear of God which alone keeps the heart of man sober and watchful and faithful in Christ until the end.

Depart from me; for I am a Sinful Man, O Lord

St. Luke v.

8. *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

WE read this story this morning, brethren, in the Gospel for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, and in calling your attention to it again this evening, I do not propose to speak of the subject of the miraculous draught of fishes itself, nor of the promise made to St. Peter at the close of the narrative, that he should become a fisher of men; but rather to confine our attention to the particular words of the text—the words addressed by St. Peter to the Lord on the sight of His wonderful power: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." I wish to consider what it was that could lead St. Peter to wish the Lord to go away and depart from him; what he could mean, and what he could be feeling, that should make him shrink from Christ, and actually, on his knees, beg Him to

go away and leave Him, at the very moment when He had shown so signal a proof of His Divine Power and goodness.

You must observe, brethren, that though this narrative records the call of St. Peter to be an Apostle, or constant follower and companion of the Lord, so that from this time forth he companied with Christ till he left Him in the garden of Gethsemane, yet this was not the first occasion of his coming to Christ or believing in Him. You will read in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel that a good while before this, not less, it is probable, than many months before, Simon had been called by his own brother Andrew to come to Jesus; that Andrew had told him that the Messias was found, and that Jesus had already given him the name of "Peter," or the "Stone." All this, I say, had taken place a good many months before; and now Peter was gone back to his fishing, and was busy in his calling. He was a believer, a disciple, but not associated with Christ in the close and constant way that he was afterwards.

Being then occupied in his usual work, and having been busy all night fishing without any success, while he was away from his boat washing his nets, the Lord, seeing his boat lying by the shore, stepped into it to teach the people from thence. He knew Peter, and

Peter knew Him. No doubt Peter, already, as I said, a disciple, thankfully allowed Him to make this use of the boat. The discourse ended, the Lord bade him push from the shore, and when they reached the deep water let down his net again. You remember what followed. I need not recount it again. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Again I ask, how was this? What did this mean? What was Peter's feeling? What could he have meant or wished that, being as he was a disciple, the sight of the Lord's wonderful power and goodness in this draught of fishes should lead him to say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"?

I have heard and read of more than one answer that has been given to these questions, but they have not been satisfactory to me. It has been suggested that St. Peter ought to have followed Christ after his first calling, and so that he was now brought to a sense of his shortcoming and sin by seeing this proof of his Master's power. But I cannot think this. The Lord had not bidden him, on the former occasion, leave his fishing and come and join His company. I believe that he did perfectly right in going back to his common work. He was not less a disciple, nor a worse disciple, for being busy in his own calling. It became

a different thing, no doubt, when the Lord had said to him, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." *Then*, of course, he forsook all—left his boat, and his nets, and his work—and followed his Master wherever He went. Some people are called away from secular work by Christ; they are called to be in closer attendance upon Him—Bishops, Clergy, attending upon this very thing. Others are left to pursue their various callings in life, on land or on the water, of this kind or of that; and they may be just as much disciples of Christ, and just as true and good disciples of Christ, as those who are called to come nearer to His own Person, and do the work which is more closely connected with Himself.

No, I do not find such an explanation satisfactory. I rather find satisfaction in believing that it was a natural exclamation of wonder; and with wonder, a natural shrinking back from One so good, so holy, so powerful, and so Divine. I think St. Peter felt as though he said, "Thou art too good, too great for me to be near Thee. Let me be Thy disciple farther off. Do not come to me. I am too sinful, too much unlike Thee. I shrink from Thee. I am awestruck, frightened. I am not good enough for Thy near company. Depart from me. If others are better, rather go Thou to them. It would be a relief to me if Thou

wouldest leave me. I still wish to believe. I will still be Thy disciple. But I shrink, in uneasiness and distress of mind, from Thy closer Presence."

I believe this to be a truer and more real account of St. Peter's meaning, and of the feeling with which he spoke; and if it is so, it seems to me to be one which is very common, and very important to dwell upon for a little while.

I mean that men, conscious of sin, conscious of weakness, and not *very much* in earnest, do shrink from God in this sort of way. It is possible that their shrinking may seem to themselves like modesty and humility; but it is a shrinking away from God, and it may be extremely serious in its consequences.

Indeed, I suppose that in its extremest form it is none other than the same thing which the poor creatures possessed with devils in the country of the Gergesenes cried out, as you read in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? Art Thou come to torment us before the time?" Of course, I do not mean to represent the feeling of St. Peter as the same as that of those unhappy creatures; and yet, regarded only as feeling, there is a sort of likeness between the two cases.

But mark the difference. In the one case, a man

shrinks altogether away from God, flies from Him, will not believe His love, is sure that he is quite hopelessly lost and ruined, falls into despair, and that terrible recklessness of unclean living which is the characteristic of despair. And so he falls into complete and hopeless rebellion, and his end is utter loss and death.

In the other case, a man, penetrated with the sense of his unworthiness and sin, also shrinks, or at least is tempted to shrink, away from God; he feels disposed to cry with St. Peter, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But he knows that he must not yield to such a temptation. He soon recalls and repents of his faithless cry. He soon, by God's grace, comes to a better mind, and rather feels, "Return, O Lord God of Hosts—return, and visit Thy poor unworthy servant, who is burthened and sore distressed by the load of his sins." He learns by grace to trust his Saviour's love. He learns to repent of the yielding, such as it was, to the temptation of shrinking away. There may have been some likeness in the original feeling of the two, but the one has ended in despair, and the chains and darkness of the evil spirits; and the other, in the high estate of a favoured Apostle, one of the chief seats in the everlasting kingdom of glory.

Now my object, brethren, in bringing this subject before you this evening was not only to explain a somewhat perplexing passage of Holy Scripture, but also to draw from it certain lessons which it seems to teach, which are not without a strong application to ourselves.

Take, for example, the subject of the Holy Communion, of which I have this morning given notice for next Sunday. Suppose that in the interval I were to go from house to house in the parish, and, finding the fathers and mothers of the families at home, were to speak to them in this way, "My dear friends, you have, I hope, heard that next Sunday morning we purpose to administer the Holy Communion in the church. You know from the Bible that in the Communion Christ comes very sacredly and very mysteriously near to us. You know that eating (therein) His Flesh and drinking His Blood, we become one with Him and He with us, that He dwelleth in us, that He becomes to us the source of all spiritual strength and of everlasting life. You know all this and more, for you read it in your Bibles. If you do not know where to find it, I can show it to you. Will you come with us? Will you, being as you are disciples of Christ, baptized in Him and hoping for Heaven—will you draw near to Christ in the

Communion as He has affectionately invited and commanded you, or will you still stay away?"

How would they answer? what would they do? I greatly fear, brethren, that the answer, not perhaps quite so plainly given in words, would in meaning be this. "You tell us that the Communion is very sacred indeed; you tell us that in the Communion Christ dwells in us and we in Him. You tell us this, and we know that it is all true; for it is plainly written so in the Word of God. But it is this very thing that frightens me. I am not good enough. It may be well, perhaps, for some others who are better than I am to take part in so holy a thing; but as for me, I shrink from it because it is so sacred. I am afraid of it. If I were better, if my heart were more at liberty from this or that thing that troubles it, if I were ready, if I felt that I could go on being good, as surely a communicant ought to be, if—this, or that—I should like and wish to come with you and join you; but as it is, I cannot. Perhaps some other day, perhaps when I am ill, perhaps when I am well, perhaps some day or other I may be able to make up my mind; but not next Sunday, not now, not yet."

Now, brethren, I beg you to consider whether this is not exactly the language of the shrinking Peter—

"Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." I am not good enough. I am a sinful man, I am a sinful woman; depart from me, offer Thy precious Indwelling to some others, not (at least for the present) to me!

I have quoted the instance of the Holy Communion, brethren, because it seems to bear the clearest and strongest likeness to the case in the text. In both, there is the immediate Presence of Christ; in both, there is a mighty work of grace done, showing beyond all question His divine power and goodness; in both, there is the timid shrinking away under a sense of sin and unworthiness, the want of faith which can see and believe the love of the Saviour strong and warm enough to forgive all sin, and the want of devotion to clasp and claim that love, and abide in it for life.

Suppose that St. Peter, yielding to the temptation, had gone on to shrink away from Christ; suppose that he had gone on feeling and saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" what would have been the consequence? Can you not see how his faith would have dwindled away, and with his faith, his love and his hope? He, perhaps, would have lived to be an aged fisherman on the Sea of Galilee; but he would never have been the Lord's "fisher of men;" he never would have been the faithful Apostle, the loving Saint, one of the chief of that glorious company

whose sound has gone out into all nations, and their words unto the ends of the world.

And if any of us should go on refusing the precious offer of Christ's close love and communion, refusing to be brought so near to Him at His continual invitation—if we, I say, go on doing so from fortnight to fortnight, and from year to year, what will be the case with us? Shall we not be, as it were, continually bidding Him depart from us? Shall we not in a sort of mock humility, because we are, as we say, *not good enough*, be, in fact, making ourselves worse and worse? Can any one go on refusing the Lord's invitation and not be the worse for it? Can any one go on saying to Christ in His Holy Communion, "Depart from me," "Depart from me," without risking his real and final departure from Him?

Oh, my brethern, I wish it were possible for me to impress upon your minds, with half the force that I feel it myself, the exceeding importance of coming to Christ in Holy Communion. I think very highly of the importance of meeting here in church to pray. I feel very strongly the beauty and the holiness of our Church worship, the sacredness and soundness of our prayers, the blessed effect of our songs of praise, all the sweet solemnities of our weekly and daily service. I prize them most highly, and much desire that

every person in the parish should come and take part in them along with us.

But more, even than these, I prize the Holy Communion. It is the very centre of Christian worship, because it is the very centre of Christian unity. If you would meet there, if you would make up your mind to come duly prepared to Christ *there*, I should think comparatively little of other differences of usage or worship.

But how can we neglect this and be guiltless? How can we bear to grow on—some of us into old age—and yet to go on practically saying to our Lord, "Depart from me—depart from me; I am a sinful man, O Lord. I am not good enough. I shrink, and I intend to shrink still"?

May God give us grace to think of these things in earnest, lest He should at last take us at our word, and depart indeed from us.

Now, to-day, He loves us, invites us, and is ready to give us His Divine love and blessing in the fullest abundance.

But we must come in earnest, and we must come for life. We must come in real faith, in real repentance, and in real devotion. Those who come to Christ so, He will surely love and bless with everything that is most holy and happy, both on earth and in Heaven.

Feeding the Four Thousand

St. Mark viii.

6. *And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.*

TWICE, as you well remember, our Lord performed the same miracle that we read of in this passage: once, feeding five thousand; and once, as here, four thousand. Though the general nature of the miracle in each case was the same, yet the particulars were different. The place was probably different. In the case of the five thousand, it seems to have been on the green grass of the rich plain near the mouth of the Jordan; in that of the four thousand, it was on the north-east of the Sea of Galilee, near the town known as Bethsaida Julias. In the one case, the people were mostly of Jewish birth; in the other, they were chiefly Gentiles. In the first case, the loaves were five, and the fishes two; in the second, the loaves were seven, and the fishes *a few*. In the first case, the

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people were five thousand, and the baskets of fragments twelve; in the second, the people were four thousand, and the baskets of fragments seven. We are sure that these particulars are not unimportant. For our Lord took especial pains to have the people seated in companies in such a way that they might be readily counted as they sat, and the exact numbers of the people, the loaves, and the fragments are recorded by one Evangelist after another; and, besides this, our Lord expressly brings these particulars to the disciples' memory, and requires them not to forget them. "When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven." Every particular therefore of both miracles, we may be sure, is full of instruction, if we can rightly learn the lessons they convey.

Observe then, first, brethren, the extreme tenderness and love of Christ in this work of power. The multitudes had been drawn by the Divine sweetness of His teaching from all the surrounding country, and had, in the charm of His holy words, forgotten their need of food. Three days they had attended upon Him, and had nothing to eat. He would not

send them away fasting to their own homes, lest they should faint by the way.

Might He not, if He would, have kept them from being hungry by His Almighty power? Could not He, Who fasted forty days and nights in the wilderness of Judæa, and enabled His servants Moses and Elijah to go for forty days without food, and suffer no hurt, have stayed the pangs of hunger in these four thousand hearers, and enabled them, too, to do without food? No doubt He could; and if any person asks why He did not do so, and why He preferred to supply their wants in another way, I can only answer that by this means He has taught us several lessons which otherwise we might have missed.

He has taught us to reflect, for instance, how constantly and in how many ways He still exercises the same wonderful power of feeding His people by multiplying their food. See, in the harvest, how every year a much mightier work even than filling the five thousand or the four thousand is done in every land—I might say in every corn-field. The farmer sows a small number of grains—a few pecks, it may be, of wheat to the acre; and behold how in a few months the dry grains have swollen, and grown, and multiplied, and ripened to a widespread and waving harvest of golden ears, offering abundance

to the multitudes of village and city. Do we always remember, brethren, how the hand of God works as certainly and as wonderfully under our own eyes thus every year, as it did eighteen hundred years ago on the shore of the lake of Galilee? Will any one venture to tell me what is the increase which His blessing gives year by year to every grain?—how many stalks, how many ears, how many grains, are often the produce of a single grain, sown with His blessing and with His blessing ripened? And this mighty increase going on every year in all the world, to keep His otherwise famished people in comfort and abundance?

Again, we can hardly speak thus of the corn of wheat sown in the ground, and multiplied so wonderfully for His people's food, without being reminded of another Corn of Wheat—I mean the Body of the Lord Himself, dying and being buried, and springing up into the enormous multitudes of Christian men and women. All of them, in every country and in every age, He feeds with the perpetually multiplied Food of His Spiritual Body and Blood. Never failing in quantity, never failing in power nor blessing, that Divine Food fills the souls of millions upon millions of Christian people, and will go on doing so to the end of the world. There, again, is a wonder constantly

wrought under our eyes, which we may well be reminded of when we read of the crowds whom the Lord fed with the few loaves and fishes in the wilderness by the seaside. In each of these cases, and in every case, it is the blessing of the Lord which works the wonder. By the seaside "*He blessed,*" and the seven loaves and the few small fishes were enough to supply the four thousand men in the wilderness. In our fields, unless *He bless*, their labour is but lost that till them. Unless *He bless*, and give the increase, the seed rots in the ground, and the people die with hunger. In our Holy Communions, unless *He bless*, the bread and the wine have no power to reach the soul or to strengthen and refresh it with any spiritual grace at all. In all these, as in all other things, the grace and the blessing are altogether His. Without it our work is naught, and all our efforts good for naught.

Observe, again, that our Lord, though He did this miracle twice over, did it only twice. He did not interpose His Divine Power every time His disciples were hungry, or save them from the ordinary industry and forethought which should provide themselves with food. *Twice* He did it, to prove His power, to confirm their faith, to teach us various good and useful lessons; but neither when He was among His

disciples, nor afterwards, did He encourage them to expect miraculous helps to save them in times of difficulty and danger, still less to save them from the consequences of their own neglect or improvidence. Apostles laboured with their own hands—it was a Divine precept that, if any man would not work, neither should he eat—and Christian people may be, and no doubt have been occasionally, in every generation, starved to death, without miraculous supplies of food being sent to save them. No; though His blessing still works, and ever works, and will go on working in the ways that I have stated, yet it rests upon man's work, not upon his idleness. The blessing of the waving harvest, though it is all God's, does not come except where man has ploughed, and sown, and harrowed, and done his best with real toil to earn the blessing, which is not his either to deserve or to ensure. The blessing of the Spiritual Food of the Holy Communion is altogether God's; but none partake it unless men offer, and men consecrate, and men prepare for it, and partake of it in repentance and faith.

There is, I think, as true a lesson to be learned from the Lord's only doing this wonder twice, as from His having in His great mercy done it twice.

Then, brethren, I would have you observe that our Lord, in doing this wonder, does not do it without some

sort of *means*. Seven loaves and a few small fishes are, no doubt, quite insufficient for so great a number of people; still, He uses the seven loaves and the few small fishes. He does not put the small quantity aside and create a great deal new. No; He blesses the little, and it becomes enough. He does not disdain the small things, though they be very small, and in themselves very feeble; but He helps and blesses them, and, behold, they become able by His blessing to do great things. A great comfort this, I think, brethren, in many ways. For we try to do various things ourselves, and our efforts in themselves are very small and very feeble, and men may despise them and scorn them; but, small and feeble as they are, they may become wonderfully powerful if the blessing of God is asked for upon them, and if it pleases Him to bless them.

Again, I remark that He used the help, so to call it, of His disciples. He did not call Angels from Heaven to do it, nor did He in any wonderful way convey the wonderful food to the hungry multitude without using the agency of men; but He simply gave to the Twelve the broken bread of the seven loaves and pieces of the fish to set them before the people; and the loaves increased under their hands, and the fish were not exhausted before all had eaten and were

satisfied. The help of the Apostles was not, so to say, *wanted*. He did not *need* any assistance from them. They did not contribute any part of the *power*, but yet He used them and their service; and He used them so importantly that, I suppose, if any of the multitude had been left out by the Apostles, or had refused the Apostles' help, he would have had none of the food. This, too, is worth remembering. Men in themselves are, no doubt, of no power to feed the souls of men. They cannot of themselves reach their brethren's hearts, or do them spiritual good by any power of their own. But yet the Lord of the Feast employs them. He might, if He would, have dispensed with them and done without them. But it was His pleasure then, and it is His pleasure still, to send His Spiritual Food to His people's souls by their agency. He does not ordinarily act direct, but makes use of men and things to act by: men to teach, water to baptize, bread and wine to eat and drink;—all in themselves utterly weak and powerless, but, when authorized and blessed by God, made powerful to win souls, and to regenerate souls, and to feed souls, and to save souls unto Eternal Life.

Again, brethren, I remark that the disciples, when they had distributed the food to the whole of the large company, took up of broken meat that was left

seven baskets full. Observe, the disciples were, no doubt, as hungry as the multitudes; but it does not appear that they were fed first. On the contrary, they began by doing their part zealously and obediently in feeding the people. They continually supplied the food that grew under their hands to the people; and, behold, when all are filled, they themselves receive back in fragments from the people more than ever they gave—a full basket, full and running over, for every little loaf; enough and to spare, enough for all the multitude, and still more for themselves.

Here is, I think, an observation not to be forgotten. The faithful teacher will, if he be faithful to his Lord's commission, and think of his people before he thinks of himself, not fail to receive back from his people more than ever he gives them—their gratitude, their blessing, their prayers, the sight of good example in them, of faith, of resignation; fragments, it may be—this in that cottage, this in that child, this by that death-bed—fragments, I say, no doubt, but part of the same Food that he is commissioned to distribute to them, and blessed by the same Lord to his soul as to theirs.

Thus, brethren, when we dwell upon the particulars of this miracle, we find it full of good and edifying matter, on part of which I have touched thus hastily.

And, with these observations, I commend it to your own further thoughtful consideration.

Meanwhile, we are bidden now to a like Feast. The Lord is among us. He has provided for us a wonderful Food—the Food of souls. In the bread which we are about to break, and the wine we shall pour, is multiplied, not to four thousand only, but to millions upon millions, the precious Food of His broken Body and His poured-out Blood. He has bid His ministers set it before you. Here come, and be filled—filled with heavenly blessing, in the strength of which Food you may go on safely through the wilderness of life, and reach at last the happy haven of His glorious Kingdom.

We are Debtors

ROMANS VIII.

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*
13. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*
14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

DIFFICULT as the Epistle to the Romans confessedly is, so that there is, perhaps, no Book of the New Testament more difficult, it yet contains at least as many plain and clear passages—passages full of easy, intelligible Christian doctrine; passages full of the highest Christian truth and comfort—as any other in the whole Volume. Let no man be discouraged from reading the Epistle to the Romans by its difficulty. No doubt he will come upon much that is very hard to understand; but he will also come upon a great deal which he cannot fail to understand, and which will, with the help of God, go far towards making him wise unto salvation. For four of the last five Sundays, the Epistles for the day

have been taken out of the Epistle to the Romans; and very full those Epistles have been of the most precious Christian teaching.

The passage which I have read to you for the text is the beginning of the Epistle for to-day,[1] being the first three verses of the second paragraph of the eighth chapter.

It is very plain. It hardly needs any explanation; but it is not for that reason less important for us to dwell on. It is not the hard places only that we need to preach about, brethren. We must not always be wanting, like the Athenians in the Acts, to be hearing or telling of some new thing. Alas! the commonest things and the best known things are often those which we need most to think about, and the most ordinary precepts and commandments are often those which we most fail to practise.

The Apostle has been speaking of the two laws, so to call them—the law of the flesh, and the law of the Spirit. He has been showing how men, by nature and before the Gospel, are under the law of the flesh; but how, under the Gospel and by the help of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to live under a new law—the law of the Spirit. He has been showing that, even under the Gospel, both these

[1] Preached on the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

laws struggle, as it were, for the mastery in the soul even of those who are regenerate, and brought under the promises and helps of the Gospel. He has been urging that, while the law of the flesh is still felt to be a powerful adversary, having a strong hold upon the body, and no slight hold upon the mind of Christians, the law of the Spirit is given to set Christians free, and to deliver them from it—giving them strength to resist and power to conquer. He has been showing that the mind or temper which follows the law of the flesh leads to death, while that which follows the law of the Spirit leads to life and peace. He has been urging that, by the Death of Christ, Christian people have passed through a sort of death to the law of the flesh, in order that they might be alive and active and bear good fruit under the law of the Spirit.

Having urged all this for many verses, the Apostle reaches the paragraph which begins with the verses of the text, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors." But to whom? Not to one, but to another; not to the flesh, but, he would say, to the Spirit.

We are *debtors*. No doubt about that. But who has the real claim upon us? Whom must we pay? Two different creditors—two very different creditors—are represented as calling upon us to pay what they

say we owe them. We cannot pay both. Which has a right to all we are and all we have?

Now, the flesh is one of these creditors, and it has strong friends to back its claim. The flesh does not argue much with us. It does not attempt to convince our reason directly. It confines itself in general to whispers. It stirs our likings. It stimulates our lusts. It suggests easy ways and opportunities. It is very clever at framing excuses. It tries to show that there is no such great harm in this thing or that thing which we fancy. It suggests that other people do the like. It tries to win us with little things first—*deceits* of the world, the flesh, and the devil—feeling sure that, if we begin with little things, we shall soon learn not to flinch from great ones. And, as I said, it has friends within us to back the insidious claim. Sin and indulgence are pleasant to the natural taste. It is a matter of *resistance* and self-restraint not to give way to them. Our members are bribed. They say we owe it to them, that they have a right to this and that indulgence. This is the sort of claim, so strongly backed, so insidiously urged, so incessantly pressed from within, that the flesh makes upon us.

But, alas! woe be to us if we yield to this claim or acknowledge this debt! Strongly as it is backed,

incessantly as it is pressed, we do not owe it, we must not pay it. It has been paid for us. Christ has died to pay it. His Blood shed on the Cross has paid it all, principal and interest, a hundred times over. It is death to pay it. If we yield to it, if we go on paying it, if we live after the flesh, we must die. The Word of God speaks in the plainest terms. If we live after the flesh, we are on the road to death. We have disowned Christ and His precious Cross. We are on the high-road to death.

Observe, brethren, how the Apostle, speaking after the manner of men, uses an illustration which we all understand from the transactions of our common life.

A man is in debt. He owes a great deal of money, and he *has* a little with which he may pay at least a part of what he owes. What shall he do? He wishes to spend this upon objects of his own. He longs after something or other which he cannot bear to refuse himself. He lets himself dwell upon it. He thinks how pleasant, how easy, how cheap the thing is. He thinks how long it may be before he is likely to have another such opportunity. He allows himself to think that he shall be able to pay his debt another time—that it will not be much increased by being put off for the present. What

shall he do? Shall he be brave, manly, honest? shall he refuse himself and forego what he so much desires? or shall he yield to the temptation and do what he lusts after?

Now, I suppose, brethren, that this is very much the idea which the Apostle means to suggest to us when he puts the subject in these terms: "*We are debtors.*" We owe our service. We owe our hearts. We owe our lives. We owe our thoughts. We owe our likings and our doings. "*We are debtors.*" We owe ourselves and all that we have and all that we are. But we do not owe it to the flesh; strong and constant as are the claims which the flesh makes upon us, we do not owe it to the flesh. We must not pay it to the flesh. On no account—be the pressure ever so strong, the temptation ever so great, the liking and the wish ever so eager—we must not pay it to the flesh. We are debtors, indeed; but not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. That debt, if ever it could be called a debt, has been paid for us by the Death of Christ. His Blood has set us free from the law of sin and death. He has bought us. We are His now; everything we have, everything we are, is His now. None other has any just claim upon it. If we pay it to another, we defraud Him. He and the Holy Spirit have the only right to every

part and portion of our service. "We are debtors;" but it is to Christ and the Holy Spirit, not to the flesh. We cannot serve or pay both. If we serve or pay the flesh, we defraud, we resist, we grieve the Holy Spirit; and, unless we repent, He will surely depart from us. No such thing as compromise is possible. We must yield ourselves up in soul and body to the Holy Spirit, or we forego His help and holiness. He will not put up with half of our hearts.

But if, on the other hand, we mortify—that means, kill, refuse, put down, crush, and destroy—the deeds of the flesh; if we pay the debt we really owe, the true debt, the debt to Him Who, by His Death, has rescued us from the dominion of Satan, that is Christ—to Him Who dwells in our souls and sanctifies them, that is the Holy Spirit;—then we shall live. Two creditors, I say; two debts. The one untrue, dishonest, fraudulent, dangerous, leading through wicked indulgence and sin to nothing less than death; the other most due, most necessary, needing most self-control, most violence to our own likings, but full of grace, and leading straight to peace and Life Eternal. The one, the service of Satan; the other, the blessed service of God.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

So the Apostle continues in the last words of the text. He cautions us, for fear we should make a great mistake. Do you desire to know who are God's children? which of all the various people who claim His favour really possess it as His own true sons? Look to the way they go on in their lives. Do they pay their debt—their false, undue debt to the flesh? or do they pay their real debt to Christ and the Holy Spirit? Do they give way to the flesh? are they unchaste, unkind, idle, disobedient, malicious, untrue of speech, discontented? These and the like of these constitute that service of the flesh which, except they repent and turn to God, is the inevitable road to death. Do they cling in their soul to Christ, asking continually the help of the Holy Spirit, striving with all their might to "mortify" and kill within them the risings of unkindness, unchastity, idleness, disobedience, malice, falsehood, discontent, and the like, and so gradually coming to a clearer, holier, and more devoted state of heart before God? If, I say, this is the very truth of their souls, the very real truth of their souls before God, then I venture to say, on the authority of St. Paul in this place, that they are on the good and holy road—on that good and holy road which, by the mercy of God in Christ, will lead them on to peace

and life. "For if ye through the Spirit do kill the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

My dear friends in Christ, among whom I have been teaching the glorious Gospel now for two years and a half—God only knows with what effect; may He pardon my shortcomings in teaching, and yours in hearing!—I pray you, by the mercy and the truth of Christ, to lay this great and unquestionable truth to your hearts. If we live after the flesh—and we know quite well what that means—we must die; unless, indeed, by God's grace we turn and repent while He still gives us time and calls us to do so. If through the Spirit we mortify and kill the deeds of the body, we shall live. Let no man deceive you with vain words. Do not imagine that because, perhaps, you have once felt what you believed to be the motion of the Holy Spirit in your heart, therefore you are, and to all eternity must be, saved. I fear that there are many who deceive themselves in this way, and deceive themselves so far as actually to think that even if they sin after that, if they are unchaste, drunken, disobedient, malicious, these things are no sins in them; for that God has marked them for His own, and they cannot fall. Do St. Paul's words, think you, warrant them in such confident, such presumptuous thoughts? Does St. Paul say,

"Brethren, ye have been converted, and now ye are safe"? Or does he say of himself, "Brethren, I count myself to have apprehended, and to be safe"? You know he does not. You know that he bids you look for the signs of the Spirit, into Whom ye were baptized, in all holy living. He bids you not grieve by ill living the Holy Spirit, by Whom ye were sealed in Baptism unto the day of redemption. He tells you of himself, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of my high calling in Jesus Christ;" and he urges us, as many as hope to be perfect, to be so minded. What think ye? Are ye better than St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than all the other Apostles? Are ye safer than St. Paul, who did not think that he had already attained or was already made perfect? Are ye better than St. Paul, who, being a baptized man, strove himself, and urged other Christians to strive, to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, reminding them that it is God Who worketh in us all, both to will and to do according to His good pleasure?

We cannot strike out new paths for ourselves. There are no new ways to Heaven. You must hold

to the old way, which is as old as the Church of God, as old as the days of the Apostles.

And the way is, in one sense, easy—easy, I mean, to know, and to teach, and to tell others of. The way is this. First, to be baptized and brought within the flock and fold of God, and thereby to drink into one Spirit;—that is the first thing. Then, to learn and be obedient as a child. Then, to receive the Bishop's blessing in Confirmation, in order to strengthen and confirm the graces received in Holy Baptism. Then, to cling to Christ and to the communion of His Sacred Body in the Lord's Supper. These are the outward things. And the inward things are these: to pray continually in private and in public; to confess sin with the most earnest resolution of amendment and prayer for grace; to cling to the outward communion of God's people; to be holy, undefiled, just, pure, and self-denying in body and soul.

This is the Christian's path on earth; and it leads to Heaven. And, if he has strayed from this path in earlier days, and offended God by heavy sin, let him turn in serious and sacred repentance back to Him Who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn and live, and Who spares us to live on for no other purpose but that we should

come to repentance and to holiness before we die. So may the sinner regain the path from which he has strayed, and find himself once more among the people of God in His Holy Church.

This is the path which we must hold to ourselves, and to which we must, so far as in us lies, win others. We must not invent new ways, nor, so far as we can help it, let others invent new ways. We must follow the Church, the Apostles, the Gospel; and we must take deeply into our hearts the great truth that, if we live after the flesh, we must die, but if through the Spirit we hold down and crush and kill the deeds of the body, we shall live.

He that thinketh he standeth

1 Corinthians x.

12. *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

THERE is a petition in the Litany which, among many precious petitions, always seems to me to suggest some very good and useful thoughts. "That it may please Thee to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet." And I imagine that people, when this petition is read (unless, indeed, they are quite careless, and pass over the words without attending to them at all), generally cast a hasty glance, a momentary look, at themselves as the words are spoken, so as to think to which of these classes they themselves belong. "Am I," they think for a moment, "one of those that stand? or am I one of the weak-hearted? or do I fall? Which prayer suits *me?* which of the three prayers is offered for me? Is it

that, inasmuch as I do stand, I may be strengthened; or that because I am weak-hearted I may be comforted and helped; or that because I fall I may be raised up?" And I also suppose that most people, having cast this hasty passing glance at themselves, speedily forget it again, as the Litany goes on to other petitions and they are led to think of other things.

The short saying of St. Paul, which I have read for the text, leads me to beg you, brethren, to look a little longer and a little more deliberately at this petition.

Observe, then, there are three classes of people for whom we pray in this petition. First, those who do stand, that they may be strengthened; secondly, the weak and feeble hearted, that they may be helped and comforted; and, thirdly, those that fall, that they may be raised up again.

To which of these classes, brethren, do you think you belong? I desire to ask each one of you separately, Christian man, Christian woman, consider with yourself which of these three classes do you think you belong to? It is a serious question, and one that ought to be seriously answered. Let me try, brethren, with the help of God, to offer some little assistance towards the answering of it.

And, first, I will begin with the third class. I suppose that no person, who intends to deal at all

honestly with God or his own conscience, will doubt that, if he has committed some undoubted sin and has not earnestly repented of it, he belongs to those who fall. If he has done an act of dishonesty, or malice, or unchastity, or falsehood, or blasphemy, or any other such thing, and has not very earnestly repented of it,—I suppose, I say, that no man can deceive himself so far as to doubt that he has fallen, heavily, dangerously, and, unless he repents, fatally.

Now, it is not my purpose at present to say much about such people. Only let any one whose conscience tells him that he has thus fallen remember that for him there can be no real peace in life, nor real hope in death, nor real comfort anywhere, unless God raise him up by the grace of His pardoning Spirit to true repentance and thorough amendment. Sins—clear, undoubted sins—cannot be simply put aside and forgotten. Unless by God's grace they be truly repented of, and by His assured mercy forgiven upon true repentance, believe me, they will rise again to your most sad and hopeless misery; they will come back to your conscience years after; they will probably haunt your death-bed; anyway, they will certainly rise against you at the Judgment Day. Men and women try to put their sins out of sight, and hope to live on and forget them, and call them by easy names

—this person, they say, was overtaken; and that one had a misfortune; and the like—and try to forget (and they do to a great extent succeed in forgetting for a while) that sin does indeed dishonour God, and that God does not pardon sin unless men or women turn from their sin, and confess, and repent, and cry earnestly for pardon for Christ's sake, and, crying for pardon, leave off from sin and amend. Let us then, brethren, for ourselves and for our neighbours, earnestly pray that God will raise up them that fall—that He will lift them up out of sin, and out of forgetfulness, and out of despair, and make them cheerful again and happy in the feeling of His pardoning grace and mercy in Christ.

The second class for whom we pray in this good petition is that of those who are weak-hearted. I suppose the word means such persons as mean to do right, and try on the whole to do right, but constantly find that they fall into temptation and offend, where they had really *wished* and, in a certain sense, *tried* to do better; and we pray for them that God would be pleased to comfort and help them. "Comfort" here, I imagine, means make them stronger, give them more fortitude and strength of grace to keep them from this sort of tottering and feeble and uncertain obedience.

Now, if we all estimated ourselves according to the

real truth, according to the real condition of our own hearts as they are and as God sees them, I suppose we should, most of us, rank ourselves with these—the weak-hearted. For, really, it is probable that we are very weak-hearted, even the strongest of us; and if we do not think that we have greatly *fallen,* so as to come into the third class, yet we must know, if we judge ourselves carefully and honestly, that there is a great feebleness and instability about our way of living, and that we continually fall into sins, more or less heavy, so as to need the comforting and supporting help of God at all times. But yet it is not most of this class of people that I propose to speak this evening. Though I beg of you to remember how greatly they need your prayers, and in their name (that is, brethren, in your name and my name) I beg you often to ask His comfort and help for those who are thus weak-hearted and feeble and tottering in their faith and obedience.

I rather am led by the words of St. Paul which I have chosen for the text to speak to you, brethren, of the first of the three classes for whom, in this petition, we pray: "That it may please Thee to strengthen such as *do stand.*" Who, then, are those who *do stand* before God? Are they many—and who are they—who *do stand?*

I can tell you, brethren, who they are *in the abstract*, as men say. They are those who, by God's great grace, are and have been kept all along from committing great and mortal sins. They are those who, having been made children of God and members of Christ's Body early, have led the rest of their lives according to that beginning. They have been dutiful, industrious, good children, who have never given parent or teacher or friend one thought of anxiety or pain; truthful, unselfish, loving, cheerful, fond of prayers, early pious, growing up as children in favour with God and man. They are those who, when childhood was over, and they became more their own masters, still loved the pious, holy ways in which they had been bred; pure in talk, pure in act, and pure in thought; loving God, loving prayers, loving Christ; not idling about, industrious, entirely honest, helpful, kindly; very humble about themselves, but greatly esteemed by good people. They are those who, as fathers and mothers of families, are the good, steady, religious, happy, pious people of a village or neighbourhood; the supporters of everything that is good; the people to whom their neighbours look for comfort in sorrow, for advice, for example; who bring up their children in good Christian discipline and instruction, teaching them to love God, to be constant

in their prayers, and to be honest, sober, and helpful in their places in life. They are those who, when old age comes on and grey hairs, and the limbs begin to fail, and the days of manly work to be over, draw nearer to God every day that they draw nearer to the grave; who have leisure now for more undivided thoughts of God and Heaven; who seem to dwell with God, so gentle are they, so holy, so sweet in temper and spirit; who seem to grow less fit for the earth and more fit for Heaven every day, gradually sinking into weakness and decay amid the love and the blessing and the respectful affection of all that are round about them. These, I say, and such as these, are, I suppose, those who really *do stand* in the sight of God; and I will venture to say that they are just the people who feel least assured that they do stand. They are just the people who have so strong a sense of their own weakness and of their own continual offending against the perfect Law of God, that they are the very last to think so well of themselves.

I fear we must conclude that those who really *do stand* before God are very few indeed; and I suppose, as I just said, that those who really approach most nearly to it are least likely to think so of themselves.

But do not many people *think* they stand? Do not most people think so? or, if they do not say they

think so, do they not act as if they thought so? If a man knows himself to fall, or to be weak-hearted—if he has any religion in him at all, he prays, he asks for pardon, he tries to do better, he begs God to help him to amend; but if he thinks he stands, he does not feel the need of all this, he can go on all day long without thinking of God, and not miss the thought or be made unhappy by missing it. He can go to bed without saying his prayers, and get up in the morning without saying his prayers, and feel none the worse. He can stay away from church often, or from the Holy Communion always, and not be a bit unhappy about it. He can grow old and see his hair turn grey, and not be afraid to think that death is drawing on. *He thinks he stands!* Brethren, do not many of us in this way seem to think that we stand? Oh, then, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"! Is not such a condition a very dangerous one? Would it not be better, safer, wiser, if such an one thought himself weak-hearted and feeble, and so prayed for grace to comfort and help him, rather than that he should imagine that he stands, and so really be in the greatest danger of a fatal falling?

No one, I should suppose, can doubt that this is a very common case—so common as to be most important to bring before you, brethren, lest any of us

should be deceiving himself so far as to think he stands, when in fact his condition may be ever so widely different from what he thinks.

And there is yet another sort of people who most urgently need to remember St. Paul's caution, that they who think they stand should take heed lest they fall. I mean those who, flattering themselves that they have received a personal conversion and call of the Holy Spirit, believe that they cannot sin any more, but are now safe in the favour of God so as never to be able to lose it again. Oh, let him who thinketh thus that he standeth take great heed lest he fall! There can hardly be a sadder or more fatal delusion than that of a man who, because he *thinks* that he has received the converting call of the Holy Spirit, sins boldly against God, which he *knows* to be wicked. The signs of the Holy Spirit are to be seen in holy living, in constant prayers, in faith, in purity, in soberness, in honesty, in industry, in piety of all sorts. Can any self-deceit be more terrible than to suppose that sin is not sin in one who calls himself converted? or that a man can possibly be in the favour of God unless he is proving his possession of the grace of the Holy Spirit by really good and holy living? Oh, brethren, if there is one thing which I would warn you against with more earnest entreaty

than another, it is that you would not allow yourselves to be cheated by so fatal a deceit as this. Believe me —or, rather, believe the true Word of God—"He that doeth righteousness is righteous." "Whoso doeth not righteousness is not of God." Can words be plainer? What, then, of him who says he is converted and therefore cannot sin; and yet allows himself to break the sixth commandment, or the seventh commandment, or the eighth commandment? Is he not suffering under a most terrible delusion, and one which, unless he repents and turns to God in time, must be fatal to him?

Then, let him that thinketh he standeth take great heed lest he fall!

And we, brethren, the rest, shall we not think earnestly of our condition before God, and consider whether we stand before Him, or are weak-hearted, or fall?

And suppose, brethren, that we feel ourselves among the weak-hearted. Suppose we feel that our obedience is not half so good as it ought to be; that we give way, day by day, to many temptations which lead to offences of thought, word, and act. Suppose we feel that our prayers are not so earnest, nor our thoughts of God so constant and devout, as we would have them; so that if God were to be extreme to

mark what we have done and still do amiss, we should be utterly unable to abide His judgment—and I imagine that this is what we should all (when we are seriously and religiously disposed) say of ourselves—what then? what are we to do then? Surely, to take great heed, very watchful heed, lest we fall; lest our old sins, unrepented, ruin us; lest fresh sins, unresisted, overpower us; lest in our weakness we fall further away from God, so as to endanger His giving us up altogether at the last.

Yes; to take great heed, every day, all day, by night and by day, whether we are alone or among other people; asking God continually to pardon our sins for Christ's sake, and to help us continually by His grace to serve Him better.

Weak-hearted men and weak-hearted women thus may come at last *to stand*—not in any strength of their own, but in the pardoning mercy of God for the sake of Jesus Christ. They may come to *stand before God in the Judgment Day;* yes, though they have sinned ever so much and so often, but now repentant and faithful, they may stand before God in the Judgment Day, safe and accepted in Jesus Christ and for His sake.

But beware of presumption! beware of the presumption of indifference and the presumption of fanaticism! I fear that, while both are very dangerous,

the latter is apt in its consequences to be oftener fatal. Well did David exclaim, "Keep Thy servant from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me: so shall I be undefiled and innocent from the *great offence;*" and I know not what offence can be greater than presuming upon the Gift of the Holy Ghost to such a degree as to sin without fear and without repentance.

Therefore, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and let us all pray that it may please God to strengthen to the end such as by His grace do stand; to support and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall; and so to bless our separate battles of faith, that finally Satan may be beaten down under our feet, and we, weak though we are, and sinful as we may have been, may be more than conquerors through Him Who hath loved and redeemed us.

The Strength of Working Prayer

St. James v.

16. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

IT is the inevitable inconvenience of a translation from one language into another that, however justly the general sentiment and the general character of the wording may be transferred, there is always something which defies transfer. The words selected in the original have their own peculiarities of usage. They have their own relationship to other words and other shades of meaning, not directly intended, but by no means forgotten as they are used. The very order in which they stand often has a force in their own language which is too delicate to be communicated through the medium of another. Thus it often happens that, though the translation be perfectly faithful, and perhaps incapable of amendment, yet to those who read and understand the original it fails to give all—it often even omits much—which they are sorry to lose, and do not know how to preserve.

The saying of St. James which I have chosen for the text will illustrate my meaning. I have no fault to find with its general accuracy; and yet I see various small particulars in the original which seem to me to give a force and distinctness to his Greek words which I miss in the English.

More exactly rendered, St. James's words say this: "Great is the strength of the praying of a righteous man in its working." The adjectives "effectual" and "fervent," which stand in the text in the English, have no corresponding adjectives in the Greek; nor, indeed, do the words "availeth much" represent any precisely similar words in the original.

I will, therefore, not scruple, brethren, in the few words which I have to address to you this afternoon, to hold as closely as possible to the actual wording of what St. James wrote, and, taking these words to be in English, "*Great is the strength of the praying of a righteous man in its working,*" to call your attention to the points which it seems to offer for our consideration. They are great ones, and they are not without much application to this eventful time.

Observe, then, that the text puts four things before us: the praying—of a righteous man—is very strong—working, or in its working.

1. *The praying.* I remark that it is not said, "the

prayer." And the difference is worth observing. If it were said, "the prayer," it might seem as if the words of the prayer were like a *charm,* such as we read of in ancient fables, when some particular words repeated over by any person are spoken of as able to produce some wonderful effect, so that, whoever uses them, they are regarded as equally powerful: the power —some mysterious imaginary power—being in the *words* themselves. Such, in its way, was the cry of the Ephesians, repeated for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Such was the cry of the Baal-worshippers, from morning until noon, "O Baal, hear us!" Such, I fear, are the multiplied "Pater nosters," and "Aves," and Masses of the Roman Catholics, repeated over and over again, as if the power could reside in the repetition of the words. It is not so in this text. It is the *praying*—the constant, earnest praying of the heart; not without words, no doubt,—at least in general—but the constant, earnest praying of the heart, to which the effect is attributed by St. James.

Note this as the first point.

2. Secondly, it is the praying of *a righteous man;* not anybody's praying. It is not only that a man, whoever he be, be on his knees every day, or all day long; it must be the praying of a righteous man.

Now, whom do we mean by a righteous man? We must distinguish two things. By a righteous man, according to the teaching of the New Testament, we mean, first, a man who, being incapable, as we all are, of being really righteous in himself—really, I mean, and thoroughly good and holy—clings in faith to the righteousness of Christ, and looks to be accepted as righteous in Him,—*that first;* and, secondly, the same man who, thus righteous in Christ's righteousness, tries and prays and strives, under the aid of the Blessed Spirit of God, to be as really and thoroughly righteous in himself as under that sanctifying Spirit he may. This is the righteous man of the text; and, adding this description to what I have said before, I say that St. James is speaking of the continual heart-praying of the man who, clinging to the righteousness which has been won for him in Christ, is earnestly bent on rendering to God, in his own body, soul, and spirit, by the help of the Holy Ghost, the offering of a righteous and saintly life. That is the sort of man of whose praying the Apostle speaks.

3. Then, thirdly, that sort of praying by that sort of man is *a very strong thing.* It is, of course, wholly out of sight. No one can trace it. No one knows who prays like that. No man can tell whether the prayers that are offered in church, in private, in the

family, at any time, really come of that sort of praying; nor can any one of us judge another, so as to say for certain that one is or is not such a righteous man as the text speaks of. But there are, no doubt, many righteous men praying in that way—some clergy, and some lay people; some men, some women; some rich, some poor; some old, and some young. No doubt, I say, there is a great deal of heart-praying which God sees and knows, though we have not the means of seeing it or knowing it for certain. But wherever it is, secret or not secret, in this place or in that, it is a very strong thing. It is stronger than any natural force. It is stronger than the wind, stronger than the earthquake, stronger than the sea, stronger than anything in the world; for God is moved by it, and He moves all Creation at His pleasure—the wind, and the storm, and the earthquake, and the sea, and whatever is strongest and most terrible in nature moves but at His bidding.

4. And, fourthly, its strength lies in the energy of its *working*. It sets on foot a mighty system of energies. The Angels of God execute, the souls of men are wrought upon, the course of human events is guided, the grace of God is won, the Holy Spirit of God is abundantly poured out, by the secret incessant working of that mighty spiritual power that belongs

to the "praying of the righteous man." Praying earnestly, praying for ever; praying in words, or praying without words; praying in church, praying at home; praying in ordinary prayer, praying in Holy Communion, which is the greatest of prayers; praying, as I said, earnestly, constantly, always;—the men who are righteous in the sight of God are wielding in that praying a mighty power, which human philosophy knows nothing about, which it is wont to deride and despise, but which is, nevertheless, the greatest and most effectual power of all that God has given in this lower world.

But I apprehend that, when the Apostle speaks of the strength of prayer in its *working*, he means also to remind us that strong prayers are not matters of *words* only; but that we also should do, and do with all our might, everything that God has put into our power to help forward and effect that which we pray for. Little use to spend days and nights in words of prayer, if the small efforts of *working* which we are capable of are wanting to set on foot, and, so far as they go, to help, the great energies of which I have been speaking.

You remember that the Lord Himself, pointing to His own miraculous works—to the stilling of the sea, the feeding of the multitudes, the healing of the sick,

and the raising of the dead by His own mere word of power—told His disciples that greater works still than these they should do, because He went to His Father. And what are these greater works? And why should they depend upon His going to His Father? The works He spoke of were the spiritual works which are done by the earnest praying; and they depended upon His going to His Father, because, by going to the Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit to be the Spirit of Prayer dwelling in the hearts of His righteous servants. The works, I say, are the spiritual works—the works that are wrought upon the souls of men, whereby they are turned and won and brought to Christ by the earnest, loving, unwearied power of *working prayer*. How could we hope that the souls of men should be reborn in one Sacrament of the Gospel, and Divinely fed in the other; that the Truth should be effectively preached and the hearts of men touched and won by it; that Missions should be made effectual to the gaining of souls to Christ,—if we did not rely on the promise which God has given to *working prayer?* This it is that assures us of all the mighty invisible Agency of which I spoke. This it is that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, wins blessing for ourselves, for our families, for our friends, for our Church, for our country, for all mankind. Praying so

in the Spirit, though we be, in our own station and as men see us, the least influential and important of mankind, we have the power to bring down blessing on all we love and care for, even to the most distant of mankind. We can do mightier works than stilling the sea, or healing the paralytic, or turning the water into wine, or raising the dead to life.

I do not know what you may think, brethren, but to me it seems like a very strong incentive to greater holiness of living, greater self-control, greater faith, greater efforts to serve God according to His Will, that we are thus taught that this is the way by which our very prayers will become more effectual in working the great spiritual works we long for. Do we desire that the thick populations of our cities should be reached by the voice of the Christian preacher? It is something, no doubt, to give our money—more to give our active efforts. But think of the great strength of the righteous man's praying, and, by more efforts of faith and holiness, endeavour that *your* praying may become effectual to so great an end.

Do you desire that the heathen should be converted to Christ? that the Hindoos, the New Zealanders, the Africans, should be brought into the fold of the Gospel? You cannot go and teach them; your sphere of duties is at home. But I will tell you what you can do.

You can earnestly seek the righteousness which is Christ's, and which you may win by the Holy Spirit, and in proportion to your progress in holiness will be the wonderful increasing of the power of your praying.

Do you long for the holiness of your friends, your children, your brothers and sisters, your father and your mother? In proportion to your own faith and repentance and holy obedience will be the efficacy of your praying in working so great a work. All these great works begin at home. They have their spring, their source, in the truth of our own devotion. If we are real—real to the very ground of our heart, righteous in Christ—then our prayer is very powerful; there are no limits to its power. If not—if we are careless, impure, unholy—we must not look for good effects from our praying. The promise does not speak of such.

Who can tell us the limit of the blessing which might attend the faithful praying of even a few—say, of such a congregation as this—if those prayers came from hearts righteous before God, working, and setting to work the great agencies which wait upon prayer? May we not believe that God will bring great and lasting good, even out of all this present evil of war,[1] and

[1] Preached in August, 1870.

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bless the nations far and wide with a more lasting and trustworthy peace, even in consequence of this terrible aggression and all the immediate miseries it is bringing with it?

But, brethren, while we venture to speak so, and to magnify the effect of intercessory prayer, never forget whose prayer it is that alone can be conceived to have any power at all. It is not everybody's, anybody's prayer. No; it is the prayer of him who, in Christ's righteousness, and in the struggling and earnest desire of righteousness in the Holy Spirit, is righteous in the sight of God. It is the strong praying of the man or woman who in secret walks with God, who fights the inward battle, and by degrees prevails against the flesh and its lusts, against the world, and against the devil. The power of prayer is not in itself; it is in the Spirit of Holiness, Who, with strong crying, cries from the heart of God's people.

That we have such among us, I trust and doubt not —*many* such, secret, humble ones, little known it may be among men, but great ones in the sight of God and good Angels, we may well think; simple, unconscious Christian people, doing their daily work, saying their daily prayers, watching their hearts, very doubtful of themselves, thinking well of others; but who are, in fact, the benefactors of their Church and their country

—the ten, the twenty, the fifty righteous who save the city.

Oh, brethren, think of the undeserved mercy of God which, in the midst of the tumult of the nations —while in one part of Europe men have been vainly and, as I verily think, blasphemously elevating a fellow-man to the claim of the incommunicable infallibility of God, and in another deluging the lands with precious human blood—has allowed us to gather our quiet harvest, to meet safely in the House of Prayer, to hold fast the sober faith of our fathers in the Church, to pursue our avocations in quietness and peace in all the towns and villages of our favoured land!

But for how long? Shall the like miseries never reach us? Are we safe because the sea washes our island shores, or because we trust the wisdom of our statesmen, the skill and bravery of our soldiers and sailors, or any other such thing? God forbid that we should undervalue the material means of defence and safety which God requires us to use for our own good! But not in these, nor in the like of these, lies the true answer to the question—How long?

As long as the true spirit of holy, humble, powerful Prayer is among us. As long as in our homes, be they mansions or cottages, as long as in our churches, as

long as in our own hearts, dwells, by and in the very presence of the Comforter within us, the spirit of holy, humble, powerful Prayer. As long as, strong in the righteousness of Christ, and strong in the personal righteousness to which, by the Spirit of Christ, it is given to Christian men to attain, we do not slacken in our fervent, earnest, free, world-wide prayers, working in prayer, working with prayer; for very great is the strength of the praying of a righteous man in its holy spiritual working.

Elijah's Sacrifice

1 Kings xviii.

39. *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.*

YOU no doubt will remember this verse, as occurring in the midst of the First Lesson for this Morning's Service.[1] I propose, with the blessing of God, to call your minds back for a short time to that Lesson, which contains the account of the great sacrifice by the Prophet Elijah upon Mount Carmel.

In order to understand the case better, I must first call your attention to the circumstances of the history under which it happened.

Ahab, king of Israel, succeeded to his father Omri, who had reigned for twelve years, during which he had built himself the capital city of Samaria. Omri had been a wicked king, worse than any that had gone before him; but his son, who reigned twenty-two years in the newly built city, outdid even his wicked

[1] Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

father in all manner of sin. Nothing so surely brings sin and evil and all manner of sorrow upon the children, as the sin of their parents. An evil father or mother is the heaviest misfortune that can happen to a child. It does not, indeed, excuse his sin, but it surely makes his case a sadder and more anxious one; for the sin that the child *sees* goes much deeper into his heart than the words of advice which, perhaps, the sinful parent may think well sometimes to speak.

On coming to the throne, young king Ahab did an act of more flagrant rebellion against the Law of Moses than any of his predecessors had ventured upon. For, not content with continuing their sin by still keeping away, and keeping his people away, from going up to Jerusalem to worship, he actually married the daughter of Ethbaal the king of the Zidonians, in direct defiance of the express command of God in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Now, I suppose that this was a piece of what men would call *worldly policy*. Zidon was a rich commercial city, full of profitable trade; and an alliance with the king of such a city would be likely to make the young king of Israel more powerful and important among the neighbouring princes than if he had confined himself to the narrow borders of the ten tribes over whom he reigned.

Marrying Jezebel, he was not contented to do his politic work by halves. He determined to unite himself and his people, heart and soul, with the wealthy people of Zidon. So he brought in, along with his young queen, her religion as well. He worshipped Baal himself, and he reared up an altar for Baal in his new city of Samaria, and apparently intended either to abandon the worship of Jehovah altogether, or to mingle it with that of his new and abominable idol.

And all seemed to prosper for a good many years. The young king and queen carried on their design with apparent success. Priests of Baal multiplied till they numbered four hundred and fifty men. No doubt there were still seven thousand left in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal, nor kissed his loathsome image; but they were faithful in secret, so that the very prophet himself did not know of their faithfulness. But seven thousand were, after all, but a very few (there had been eleven hundred thousand fighting men in Israel in the days of David; and I suppose that the seven thousand faithful people in Ahab's days included no small proportion of faithful women) —seven thousand, I say, were a very few of the whole population of Israel, and that small number proves that the vast majority of the nation had gone along

with Ahab and Jezebel, and accepted—with how much cordiality and willingness I cannot tell—the worship of Baal.

And here I cannot but remark upon the strange wilfulness and fickleness of the people. No doubt they had been badly governed for many years, and no doubt, also, the whole nation was in sin; for they had all agreed in the original rebellion of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and had made themselves a separate nation and set up a separate worship, instead of forming part of God's single nation and going up to worship at Jerusalem, where He had set His Name and called all the tribes to go up to their national worship. But for all that, we could hardly have thought that the whole people would thus, except a small fraction, have gone away from God, have followed the lead of a wicked young king and his idolatrous wife, to desert the God Who had from the days of their forefathers—from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from Moses and Aaron, from Joshua and Samuel—been their Almighty Protector and Defence, the Boast of their nation, Jehovah the God of Israel.

But so it was. The fashion had got abroad; and, strange to say, people are often taken with fashions in religion, and, even if they do not give up worship and religion altogether, are fond of worshipping in

their own way, and leaving the good old way of their fathers, the sober, quiet way which God has given them, in order to run after newer and more exciting ways of their own.

So passed ten years; and, in the scanty record given us of that time, we are not told whether God, ever long-suffering, interposed during that time to check in any way the mad apostasy with which the king and kingdom of Israel were rushing headlong into ruin.

Then comes forward another person. "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

A Prophet of the Lord! Who had seen or heard of such an one for years past? A Prophet of the Lord!—a man clad in a rough garment of hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins (2 Kings i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4). Such a sight accorded little with the courtly priests of Baal, who by hundreds shared the wealth and comfort of the alliance with wealthy Zidon! He delivers the Word of the Lord; he confronts the king in his pride; he announces the judgment of God: not a drop of rain upon the trees, nor a sparkle of dew upon the grass in all the land, but as he speaks—and that for years to come! And as soon as

the word is spoken, by the order of God he disappears. The word is spoken, and the Prophet is gone.

I know not how the king took the prediction—whether at the first, passionate rage at the Prophet's audacious boldness, or scorn and contempt at his claim of power, is likely to have been strongest in his mind. But day by day, week by week, month by month passed, and not a drop of rain. The sky burning hot and like copper. The fruits of the earth drooping and burnt up. All vegetation at a stand. And this going on for three long years—three long years and six months, without interruption or relief!

And where was the Prophet? None could say. The king was furious. There was not a neighbouring nation nor kingdom to which he did not send to seek after him; and when they said that he was not there, he required an oath of the kingdom and nation that they could not find him.

We know where he was: first by the brook Cherith, fed miraculously with bread and flesh by the ravens; and afterwards at Zarephath, sharing the unfailing barrel of meal and cruse of oil in the poor widow's home.

By this time famine was sore in Samaria. Three years—three years and a half, according to St. Luke—were gone, and no mitigation or relief had come,

when the word of the Lord came again to Elijah, "saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth."

Here we open the narrative of the eighteenth chapter, the First Lesson for this Morning's Service.

Obadiah, the pious and faithful governor of Ahab's house, is employed by Ahab to search the land for springs and brooks of water, in hopes of finding grass, to save at least some of the horses and mules, lest they should lose all the beasts, as no doubt they had already lost many. On his way he meets the stern Prophet, and knows him at once by his rough attire and his girdle of leather. "Art thou that my lord Elijah?" and he said, "I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here."

I need not go over the whole tale. Suffice it to say that the king and the Prophet meet; and the first words of the king seem to show, not the fury we might have expected, but rather a mixture of hatred and respect, of indignation mingled with awe at the sight of him. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Look at the parched fields! look at the starving people! look at the widespread misery! This is all thy doing; and dost thou, the troubler of Israel, venture to come before me once more? "And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and

thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table."

Now I think it is very striking to see the way in which the king submits—not a word of remonstrance nor resistance. The Prophet's words, strengthened beyond all possibility of disobedience by the visible misery of the land desolated by the long drought, are obeyed at once. "So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel."

Mount Carmel is not a single hill, but a long ridge of high ground, which, projecting into the sea with a high bluff towards the north-west, so as to form the southern extremity of the Bay of Acre, gradually rises higher and higher, till at its south-eastern end it becomes a very considerable mountain, commanding the whole of the rich Plain of Esdraelon to the south and south-east, and looking over the lower ground westward, so as to command the long horizon of the Mediterranean Sea at the distance of about twenty miles.

At this spot, which even at the present day retains

a name signifying "The Burning" or "The Sacrifice," had stood an ancient Altar of the Lord, which queen Jezebel had thrown down. There we may conceive standing, on the one side the king and, alas! the people, with the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the goddess of the groves; and on the other side the solitary and commanding figure of the Prophet of the Lord. They stood around an ancient well of water, which is seen to this day as a vaulted and very abundant spring that never fails. Full before them opened the whole Plain of Esdraelon, with Mount Tabor and its kindred hills in the distance; on the rising ground, at the opening of its valley, the city of Jezreel, with Ahab's palace and Jezebel's temple distinctly visible; in the nearer foreground, immediately under the base of the mountain, was clearly seen the winding stream of the River Kishon working its way through the narrow pass of the hills into the Bay of Acre.

Then followed the scene which you, no doubt, remember well—the scene of the Sacrifice, the frantic cries of the four hundred and fifty priests, cutting themselves with stones and leaping upon their altar from morning till noon, from noon till the time of the evening sacrifice: in vain; for "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

Then the Prophet, selecting from the rocky fragments which still lie around twelve natural stones, according to the number of the tribes, and rebuilding the Altar which had been thrown down, disposed the sacrifice, and once, and twice, and three times poured water over the sacrifice till it ran round about the Altar, and filled the trench that surrounded it.

You know what followed—how, in answer to the Prophet's prayer, the fire of God came down and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench; and how all the people, when they saw it, "fell on their faces, and said, The Lord Jehovah, He is the God; the Lord Jehovah, He is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them unto the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

Such are some of the circumstances of this striking and wonderful narrative; the scene and even the particulars of which are hardly made plainer in the history of the Book of Kings than in the traditions of the wild inhabitants and in the recently explored scenery of the neighbourhood.

Can we draw no lessons from it to ourselves? or is it only a vivid tale of God's doings in distant ages

and to other people? No doubt, brethren, there is much that we may learn from it; but the particular lesson which strikes my own mind most forcibly is this—that men are very fickle; that fashion in religion is very strong; that excitement soon wears away, and is soon succeeded by indifference and neglect; that outward warnings tell very little upon unfaithful hearts; and that nothing but inward faith and piety can bring men near and keep them near to God. Should we not have thought that, after the scene on Carmel, and the acknowledgment of Jehovah by the people, followed by the death of all the false prophets, Israel would have turned back to God; that Ahab, or, if not Ahab, at least the people, would have left Baal, and come back to the great God of their fathers in repentance and faith?

Was it so? Read on a few chapters. Elijah flies from the rage of Jezebel to Mount Horeb; Ahab is succeeded by his son Joram; the worship of Baal is restored with greater magnificence and success than ever; and it is not till the reign of Jehu, the successor of Joram, that the whole race of Ahab and the multitude of the priests of Baal are slain, and the worship of that foul idol, brought in by that wicked Zidonian woman, finally destroyed out of Israel.

Yet were there throughout, and in the worst of

times, *seven thousand* left in Israel, souls faithful and true, souls known to God in secret faithfulness and prayer, souls which never gave way to prevalent fashions or evil examples, which held fast by the sober, true, and ancient faith of their fathers, which never bowed the knee to Baal.

I will not attempt to draw the lesson closer, brethren. I would rather leave it to your own thoughts. We, too, live in anxious times; not, thank God, such terrible times as those of which we have been speaking, but times of much unbelief, of much scorn, of much false teaching, of much grievous and notorious sin in high places and in low.

Be our place, brethren, like that of the seven thousand whom God had yet left to Him in Israel. Be we content to worship and serve God according to the ancient rule and practice of our fathers in the Church of Christ; very constant and very earnest in our prayers, faithful in our belief, full of confession and repentance of our sins, striving in the Holy Spirit to make our heavenly calling and election sure by faithful, pure, and Christian living.

If thou hadst known, even thou

St. Luke xix.

41. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,*
42. *Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!*

THESE were very sad tears, brethren; some of the saddest tears, I suppose, that ever fell from the eyes of man. They have been brought specially to our thoughts to-day, having been the subject of the Gospel appointed for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity. Let us, with the help of God, dwell on them awhile this morning; for surely they may be, if we think upon them earnestly and carefully, very full of profit to our souls.

You know, I dare say, the occasion referred to. For a few weeks since the raising of Lazarus from the grave at Bethany, the Lord had been in retirement in the city of Ephraim, on the borders of Samaria. Thence, as the Passover approached, He returned with His Apostles to Jerusalem, and reached

Bethany again, and the home of Lazarus and his sisters, probably late on the evening of Friday, just before His last earthly Sabbath.

After the quiet Sabbath was over, many of the people came flocking from Jerusalem. They had seen or heard of the mighty miracle, and now they heard that He Who had wrought it had come back to Bethany; and to see Him and to see Lazarus they came out in anxious, eager, half-believing minds.

You remember in what lowly state He came to Jerusalem, fulfilling prophecy above five hundred years old as He rode towards the City, meek and lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. You remember how the crowds that came out from Jerusalem, and those that accompanied Him from Bethany, spread their garments and strewed branches of palm trees in the way, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest."

On He rode along the stony road which wound round the slope of the Mount of Olives, and, when the Pharisees tried to check the triumphant cries of the people that surrounded Him, He told them that if they held their peace, the very stones upon the road would cry out to welcome Him; till, as they turned the hillside, all at once the beautiful City burst upon

their sight. There it stood, with its great Temple on Mount Moriah, the lofty walls of which, rising upon the steep rocks which were themselves squared with solid masonry, seemed to spring from the bottom of the valley. There, I say, it stood; strong, beautiful, fearing nothing, self-contented, the joy of the whole earth, the pride of its people.

And when the strange Procession, mingled so remarkably of triumph and lowliness, came suddenly, at the bend of the road, in sight of the City, "when He beheld the City, He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known!"—oh that thou hadst known!—"even thou!"—even after all thy long history of unfaithfulness and backsliding, even after killing My Prophets and stoning them which have been sent to thee—"at least in this thy day." If not before, if not in the days of Isaiah or Jeremiah, if not in thy deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, if not in any of the judgments or mercies of thy past history, "at least in this thy day"—in this thy last trial, when the Son Himself is come to visit thee and save thee, if thou wilt be saved! "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!"—not the things which would make thee politically free or strong, not the things which worldly ambition longs after, not money, nor power,

nor any such thing as these; but the things which belong unto thy true, Divine, and everlasting peace.

"But now they are hid from thine eyes!" The day of trial is over. The long, long course of provocation is over. The judgment is come. I am come to yield up My Life to thy murderous impenitence and sin. Nothing remains now but to fill up the measure of your fathers by shedding My Blood. Even yesterday you might have repented and been saved. To-day it is hidden from thine eyes.

I say, brethren, that these were the saddest tears, and these the saddest words, that ever fell from the eyes and lips of man. For they signified that the long forbearance of God towards that sinful City was at an end; that mercy and long-suffering were now to give place to judgment; that hope was over; that obstinate sin had done its work; that nothing remained now but destruction. And the compassionate and pitying Lord wept as He pronounced the fatal words. His human heart was touched—touched to tenderest tears—for His own City, His own People, the City of His own nation and fathers,—His own unto whom He had come in mercy, but they received Him not.

I would fain dwell, brethren, upon the subject of Jerusalem, thus doomed to ruin, whose enemies should within a few years cast a trench around her, and

compass her round, and lay her even with the ground, and her children within her, because she knew not the time of her visitation.

I should like to turn from Jerusalem and its sins, and think of England—our own beautiful and powerful England—and consider whether we might not draw some useful instruction from thinking of our England's history and God's long forbearance.

And we might also turn our thoughts to our own village with good profit, and think of the forbearance of God to ourselves, and whether He must not be much provoked to desert us if He sees continual and unrepented sins among us, such as drunkenness, tattling, falsehood, schism and division, unchastity before, yes, and after marriage; and perhaps our people, like the Corinthians, rather puffed up, and not mourning and shocked and praying that such things might be taken away from among them.

I would fain, I say, dwell on all these subjects if I had time, for indeed they would suggest much very good and profitable matter for your reflection; but I rather wish to turn the text to a more personal application, and to ask you to think of it in respect to your own selves one by one.

And, first, let me say that, God be praised! the case is in one most important respect quite different as

between Jerusalem and each one of us. When the Lord wept over Jerusalem, there was no hope left. It was all sadness, and nothing besides. Oh if thou *hadst* known! To us, to any one of us, sad, mournful, melancholy as our case may possibly be, it is not like that. Even if we might suppose our Lord, our tender Lord, weeping at the sight of any one of us, He rather says, "Oh if thou *wouldst* know! Oh if thou *wilt* know!" I mean, brethren, that there is not one person here—no, nor one person not here whom the Lord still spares to hear the words of grace and mercy,—who may not even yet turn to Him, and change His tears and words of sadness into cheerfulness and acceptance.

Oh, then, dear Christian brother, dear Christian sister—we may suppose Him saying to each one of us—if thou *wouldst* but know! if thou wouldst turn thy will to My Will! if thou wouldst love what I love, and choose what I approve, and turn thyself to follow My Holy Law! *Even thou!* Even thou, whom I have known and watched from thy birth, whose childish ways, whose boyish or girlish follies, whose sins as a young man or a young woman, whose hardened forgetful living as a father or mother, whose yielding yourself up to this or that sin, and then going on without repentance, whose neglect of God, whose bad and unkind words, whose many, many sins of thought,

I have known and grieved for, and still have forborne to strike thee down in thy naughtiness, hoping still to win thee, and forbearing still!—*even thou!*

Oh, brethren, how these two simple words seem to knock at our hearts! *Even thou!* How tenderly the long-suffering Lord pleads with us! Even thou, my brother, even thou, my sister, even I! Believe me, the same kindly loving human heart that wept over Jerusalem looks upon each one of us, though not, at least *yet*, thank God, so mournfully and hopelessly, and, as it were, speaks to each, "Oh if thou wouldst know—*even thou!—at least in this thy day.*" If not before, if not hitherto. If you have been ever so sinful and foolish, if you have neglected a hundred calls of God before, if sickness has not moved you, if health has not won you, if the sight of sorrow and death in others has not startled you, if mercies have not turned you, if you have not been shocked by the sight of sins and heavy judgments falling upon some whom you have known, nor attracted to holiness by seeing the peace of mind that the Holy Spirit gives to those who diligently seek Him,—at least, *at least in this thy day.* "To-morrow," do you say? To-morrow may be too late. The forbearance of God may be almost exhausted. You may be, for aught you know, tried to-day for the very last

time. For aught you know, God may design that these words which He has made me speak, and which He has brought you here to hear, may be the very last words of Christian exhortation which He may intend to give you. It is not only that you may die—that, though, as you know, quite possible, is at least unlikely—but it is that hearts which will not hear close themselves up the more and harden themselves the more, and God only knows whether, having softened them once, He will soften them again to hear if they will not hear now. Oh, then, if thou wouldst know!—"even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" not the things which belong to thy worldly ease, nor to thy comfort, nor to the gratification of thy likings; but the things which belong unto thy peace—to thy true peace even now and here, whilst thou livest on in this world, and to thine inexpressible and eternal peace when this world is over and done with!

Brethren, it is Communion morning, and on these mornings I wish not to detain you with a long sermon. I will, therefore, only ask you, in conclusion, whether you think I have in any degree overstepped the plain and simple truth in what I have said to you; whether your own hearts and consciences do not go with what I have said; whether you do not feel the truth and

the force of the tender pleading with which the Lord so mercifully and lovingly entreats you, *even you,* to know and do and love the things which belong unto your peace? It rests with you. One by one, and all together, it rests with you.

But this I know, and confidently say, if the pleading voice of our Redeemer be really much heard and listened to among us, then, instead of thinly occupied seats and benches, we shall have our church *crowded* with earnest worshippers; instead of some forty or, at the most, fifty remaining for Holy Communion, we shall welcome all our grown-up people at the sacred Altar-Feast; instead of tales of unchastity and drunkenness, lightly thought of and uncondemned, we shall have purity and sobriety and godly discipline in our families; instead of self-complacent ignorance and presumptuous divisions, we shall have humble, earnest, inquiring Christian people, bent with one heart and soul on learning, ere the day comes when these things are hid from their eyes—on knowing, by the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, the things which belong unto their everlasting peace.

Harvest Thanksgiving

PSALM LXV.

9. *Thou visitest the earth, and blessest it: thou makest it very plenteous.*
10. *The river of God is full of water: thou preparest their corn, for so thou providest for the earth.*
11. *Thou waterest her furrows, thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof: thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it.*
12. *Thou crownest the year with thy goodness: and thy clouds drop fatness.*

THERE are many people, brethren—and they think themselves the wisest of mankind, and look down upon all others—who think that all such language as that which I have just read to you from the sixty-fifth Psalm is foolish and mistaken.

These people quite refuse to see the hand of God in all the works, as they call them, of Nature. They press their inquiries as far as they possibly can into all the things that are going on round about them in the earth, the air, the sea; and finding, as they do find, a wonderful uniformity—discovering, the further

they search, a very wonderful presence of law and order, so that things which once were thought the result of accident, or the work of all sorts of imaginary beings, are found to be the orderly product of deep laws which had not been discovered or suspected before; —finding, I say, all this, they allow themselves to think so much of the laws as to deny the presence of the Lawgiver, to push back the Will and Providence of God further and further from all immediate control of the course of the world, until at last they either deny God altogether, or look upon Him as having once for all made laws and rules and set things going, and then left them to themselves to work out their own consequences, without interfering with them any further. That God should be said to visit the earth, to bless it, to make it very plenteous, to prepare corn, to provide for the earth, to send rain to water the furrows, to bless the increase, to crown the year with His goodness; all this they look upon as so much nonsense—poetical, pretty nonsense, if you will—but not sober, scientific truth fit for the lips of men who have studied and searched and examined into things, and who know that all these things, and all other things, go on by their own force, and by deep and orderly laws which they have, in some degree, been able to explore and find out.

Now, it is necessary to show how much of all this is true, and how much of it is false; for, as in most other cases, there is a great mixture of truth and falsehood in what they say.

It is most true that the further men search into the works of Nature, which are the works of God, the more they are permitted to discover a wonderful system of laws, according to which God is pleased to act. It is most true that things which used to seem accidental, or which set ignorant and superstitious people upon thinking of all sorts of imaginary powers to account for them, are now found to be the orderly result of great principles which pervade great parts and domains of the natural world. Most true. And it is very right and very useful that men should search into these things. So far we go with these people altogether. But when they go on to drive the Lawgiver away, and banish Him, so to say, out of His own laws; when they talk of the laws as if they had any power in themselves;—then we know that it is they who are properly to be charged with talking nonsense, and that the simple belief which David expresses, as in the words of the text, is very much wiser, because it is very much truer, than all their boasted wisdom. For what is this order of Nature, except the uniform working of the ever-present God?

If He is pleased to work His Will in orderly and regular ways, are we, therefore, to think that He does not work at all? Oh no! Never give way to such thoughts as that. He is over us, near us, among us always. If the laws of Nature, so to call them, are orderly, and the more deeply we search into them the more orderly we find them, it is only that God is pleased to work in His own regular methods, and rewards our diligent study by allowing us to have some small glimpse of the deeper secrets of His government.

It may, perhaps, seem to you, brethren, that I have so far been speaking to you in a manner that is needlessly difficult, and referring to opinions which might just as well be left alone without notice. Perhaps it is so; but I have been anxious not to leave them quite unnoticed, when I am speaking on the subject of the harvest. For if there is one case in which, even more than in others, God might seem to keep all absolutely in His own hands, and neither to delegate His merciful power to subordinate agents, nor even to leave it to be worked out by orders which He framed long ago, it is in the yearly supply of food, of bread to strengthen man's heart—the unfailing yearly gift of harvest, which, wholly and absolutely His, keeps us in life and health, enables us

to maintain our families during the winter season, gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, fills our hearts year after year with joy and gladness. Think of this present year, brethren, and all the fears we felt during the long and unexampled heat and drought of the summer months, when we seemed to give up hopes of one crop after another, and to wish in vain for a gentle rain to refresh our parched and discoloured fields. Meanwhile the wheat was, under the blessing of God, striking its roots deeper and deeper into the soil, and He Who was warning us by the comparative failure of this and that was with fatherly love preparing for us a rich harvest in the most precious of all the plants which He has given for our support and sustenance. Did ever earthly father more visibly and certainly deal out, of his wise and considerate love, good things to his own children—withholding some things which they have desired, lest they should presume, and giving them, meanwhile, what is best for them with liberal bounty—than the Lord hath dealt with us, brethren, in the present year?

Is He not still, in this present year, the same merciful and loving, but wise and thoughtful, Father, as in those old days in which He made His dealings with His people more expressly known to them?—when He

sent seven years of plenty and seven years of famine upon Egypt and all the neighbouring countries, and bade His servant Joseph give warning of it beforehand to king Pharaoh, thereby sustaining alive the family of Israel; when He promised to His people, as He planted them in the land that flowed with milk and honey, that according to their obedience or disobedience, so should their crops be—that either they should be blessed in the field, blessed in the fruit of their ground and the fruit of their cattle, the increase of their kine and the flocks of their sheep, blessed in their basket and their store; or cursed in all these things, with blasting and with mildew, the heaven above them as brass, and the earth under them as iron? Does He not still bid us take warning that He is the same God, governing us by the same rules and laws of His Divine wisdom as when He bade Elijah the Tishbite stand before king Ahab in Samaria, and tell him by the Word of the Lord that there should be neither dew nor rain for years to come, save according to His word; when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and great famine was throughout all the land? when He promised to Noah, as he came forth from the ark, that, while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest should not cease? Is He not the same wise and fatherly God

Who complained of backsliding Israel that they had a revolting and a rebellious heart, and did not think in their heart and remind one another to fear the Lord their God Who giveth rain, both the former and the latter rain, in their respective seasons, and reserveth unto His people the appointed weeks of the harvest?

Oh yes, indeed, brethren; it is real wisdom, because it is real and sacred truth, to feel in this great gift of a rich and well-gathered harvest the immediate mercy and blessing of our loving and holy Father, holding out to us as certainly and well-nigh as plainly His gift of bread to the eater—bread to the eater of every rank and station among us—as we who are fathers offer at our own table a piece of wholesome wheaten bread, God's gift, to our own children. And so I call upon you all to render your thanks and praise to our most merciful and present God for this great and repeated blessing. We all eat bread. We all share the great gift. The mercy that has ripened our grain and stored our barns is a mercy to every single one among us. Then there ought not to be one among us whose heart should not be grateful, nor one whose voice of thanksgiving should be silent, when we meet—I would that the whole parish were here together this evening—to praise God for this

great proof of His fatherly love and goodness towards us.

But, brethren, this bread, thus bountifully given to us year by year—this bread, blessed as it is, and thankful as we ought to be for it, perisheth. This bread we eat, and we hunger again; this bread lasteth for a time, and the store needs to be replenished. This bread feedeth our mortal bodies for a time, but after a time it will feed us no more. Our power of digesting it will fail; we shall fall ill, we shall waste away, we shall die. The earthly harvest, blessed as it is, will be no more for us—no more than this year's harvest is for those who have died in former years, and whose bodies lie buried in peace in the adjacent churchyard.

But the same fatherly God, the same ever-present God, Who watches with not less tender care over our souls than over our bodies, is as bountiful, as loving, as rich in blessing in respect to the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, as He is year by year in the harvest of our fields.

As it was by His blessing that the seed which we sowed in those fields germinated and sprang up; as it was by the same blessing that the blade grew, the stalk rose, the ear gradually enlarged itself in the sheath, the grain swelled and ripened in the ear, and

then, when the time came, that the reapers cut the corn, and the nodding sheaves were gathered into the barn;—just so it has been by His blessing that any of us are growing towards any such ripeness as by His great mercy we may be. Man did the outward things, God does the inward ones. Man did those outward things without which the inward ones are commonly not done. But God, and God only, did the real work—gave the increase, made these outward things to be of any, even the smallest, effect or benefit to us.

Men sowed the seed in the field, but God only made it spring. So men took us to be baptized, and spoke for us; but God only gave us the grace to become members of Christ, His children, and heirs of His Kingdom.

Men kept the ground clean, rolled it, hoed it, did their part in various ways to enable the blade and stalk to grow; but not the least, not the slightest power had they to give it growth. So men tried to keep evil out of our way when we were young, taught us the Truth of God, taught us how to say our prayers; but it was the Holy Spirit of God Who moved our hearts to love Him and obey Him really, to pray good prayers such as He accepteth. It was, I say, by the Holy Spirit of God that any of this outward human

care was enabled to tell really upon our souls, and to bring us nearer to God. The sun and the rain upon our crops are God's gifts, and nothing that we can do can bring them if God withholds them. Blessed be God that in this point the likeness between the fields and our own souls does not hold. For He has so pledged Himself to help us with His grace, that the Sun and the Rain upon our souls—the fertilizing and sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit—are absolutely assured to those who diligently seek them.

There is a great and remarkable likeness between the culture of the corn in our fields and the culture of our own souls. In each the aid of man is made to be necessary and indispensable; but in each the whole of the real and essential work is done, not by man, but by God.

To-day we celebrate the happy harvest of our fields. The Harvest of souls is not yet.

For the present we are, each one of us, like the single stalks in the field, growing, ripening, perhaps, in some degree; some ears fuller, some thinner, some healthy, some it may be blighted, all partaking, or at least having it in our power to partake, of the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, in prayer, in repentance, in obedience, in church-going, and in Holy Communion. *This for the present.*

But ere long God will send forth His Angels to reap this Harvest of souls. Not indeed yet all at once; but one by one, as He sees fit, sometimes in old age, sometimes in youth, sometimes in what men think ripeness, sometimes immaturely as they blindly imagine. He sends His Angel, and the corn falls. And as it falls, according to its real ripeness in the sight of God, so is it either bound in bundles for the burning, or gathered, as good grain, into the garner of God.

Oh, my brethren, meeting as we do this evening to thank God for the yearly harvest of our fields, shall we not—will you not, my brother, my sister? shall I not?—take to our hearts the blessed but serious lesson of the last, the real, God's own great Harvest? Shall we not think very seriously where we stand before Him? how far we have repented of our sins? how earnestly we trust and rely upon His mercy in thankful faith? how seriously we endeavour to do His Will, not only in outward action, but in holy words and thoughts? how constantly and fervently we pray? how we read His Word? how we join our brethren in the holy Church prayers? how we feed our souls with His most precious Body and Blood, binding ourselves thereby in Holy Communion with Himself and with all His faithful people? It is,

I know, but the same old lesson again—the same lesson which we come back to, whatever passage of Holy Scripture we interpret, whatever topic of Divine Truth we discourse upon. We must be penitent, we must be holy, we must be faithful. God helps us; God has already done great things for us. God offers us everything. There is no strength, no aid, no power of becoming holy, which He withholds from us. Day by day the time of trial is shortened, the end is nearer.

It is a year since we last celebrated our Harvest Thanksgiving. You probably remember it as vividly as I do. We met—a large congregation; the church was full. There seemed to be, so far as man can judge, a general and unanimous consent of feeling that it was good and right for Christian people so to meet, and so to render their acknowledgments to God for His great goodness.

Well, but now another year is gone. The old are older, the young have got on one year further towards age. Might we not wisely take, as it were, spiritual stock, and think before God whether we are twelve months fitter to appear before Him than we were? Some are gone within the year; some, no doubt, in old age, but not all. I can recall one—I little thought that one so strong as he seemed, and tall, would be reaped so soon—who himself brought the sheaf which

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we set against the Altar-rails in thanksgiving last year.

I have only one more word to say, brethren, and that is this. If any person desires to give any gift, as expressing by an act his thankfulness, instead of letting it go off into mere words or feelings, whatever sums may be put into the alms-boxes at the church door will be sent to the Ryde Infirmary.

I have one special reason for selecting this particular charity for this occasion. It is this: I would that on this one occasion in the year at least, all our people, whether they are regular church-attendants or no, would come together to church.

The blessing we have received is one that God has given to us all alike. The Charity to which our bounty shall be given is one which all alike may support. For once at least, let all who love the Name of Christ join their voices in His praise, and do good to His people together for His sake.

Jonadab the son of Rechab

JEREMIAH XXXV.

14. *The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.*

WE read the story of the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab for the First Lesson in this Evening's Service[1]—one of the few chapters of the book of the Prophet Jeremiah appointed to be read in the Sunday evenings' services.

Only four chapters out of that great book are read on *Sundays*, so that those who only hear the Sunday Lessons hear a very small part indeed of it. But those who come to daily Service, or who follow the Prayer-book by reading the daily Lessons at home, hear it all. I need hardly say that it is a very precious book; and I will add that, in many ways, it is a book which is remarkably applicable to us, and to the present state of things in the Church of England.

[1] Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

But, for the present, I must speak only of the thirty-fifth chapter, one of the alternative Lessons for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Rechabites were a tribe of wandering Arabs—Bedouins, we should now call them—one of those wandering tribes descended from Ishmael, who in these days, as in those, traverse great parts of the desert of Arabia, without any fixed habitation, pitching their tents of black camels' hair, driving their flocks from place to place over a great extent of country, but without houses or regular homes. It seems likely that they were also descended from Jethro the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moses, who kept his flocks in the peninsula of Mount Sinai.

It is probable that they were believers in the true God. They were not Jews, however; and of their relation to the chosen people, and, indeed, of their religious condition in general, we have no certain knowledge.

In the early times of Nebuchadnezzar's invasions, just before king Jehoiakim was carried captive to Babylon, these children of the desert had been driven, for protection from the roving bands of the Assyrian invaders, to take shelter in the city of Jerusalem.

There, for a time, they dwelt in a house known as the house of the Rechabites, retaining all their

national and family traditions as far as was practicable, and apparently well known by, and on friendly terms with, the regular inhabitants of the city.

It was according to the usual method of God to deliver His lessons by means of some parable or example; and He now made use of these children of the desert to give point to one great lesson.

The Prophet Jeremiah was directed to go to the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers which were built round about against the walls of the Temple, and offer them *wine*. He took them accordingly—the whole house of the Rechabites—and set before them "pots full of wine, and cups, and said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters."

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah,

saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken unto My words? saith the Lord. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto Me. I have also sent unto you . . . prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them . . . but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto Me."

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus

saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever."

It is a very remarkable thing, brethren, in connection with this last promise of God, to find that about forty years ago[1] an English traveller, as he was wandering in Mesopotamia, offered wine to a Bedouin Arab of his company, when the man replied that he was a son of Jonadab the son of Rechab, and might drink no wine; and the same traveller, twelve years after, spent six days among the Rechabites in Yemen in Arabia, and says of them that even to this day they drink no wine, plant no vineyard, sow no seed, and live in tents, remembering good old Jonadab the son of Rechab, their father.

This, then, is the lesson which God taught to the wilful and rebellious Israelites from the example of the Rechabites. They, though they did not belong to the people of God, yet obeyed their father's injunction, though it was an unpleasant and unwelcome one; and shall not God's own children obey Him?—obey Him Who is their true, loving, Almighty Father, Whose injunctions, though they may not be according to the wild desires of their own hearts, are all most just, holy, and good; and Who gives all good things,

[1] Preached in 1868. The traveller was the late Dr. Wolff.

all the best and holiest things, without stint or measure, to those who faithfully and perseveringly ask Him?

But, I apprehend, the words of the Prophet and the example of the Rechabites may be applied not a whit less forcibly to Christian people at the present time than to the Jews in the days of Jehoiakim.

For example, how far do our young people obey their parents, as God in the fifth commandment bids them?

For my part, I think that a great part of the evils we have to lament and contend with at this time arise from the disobedience of boys and girls, which gradually, as they grow up into men and women, grows worse, and so makes each succeeding generation not better, but rather worse than the one that came before it. The children of Jonadab the son of Rechab have for the last two thousand five hundred years and more drunk no wine, nor planted vineyards, nor lived in tents, because a former father of their race commanded them to abstain from these things. How far do our boys and girls perform what their own fathers and mothers desire them?—go to church when they are bidden, occupy themselves usefully in their leisure times, keep out of bad company, work faithfully and industriously in their calling, stick tightly to perfect truth and honesty in their words and doings? Is it

not notorious to us all that five-sixths of the evil which we have to lament in our parishes arises in those years when boyhood and girlhood are passing into manhood and womanhood, because the young people do not choose to follow the desires and directions of their parents? The sons of Jonadab go on obeying for thousands of years; but our Christian children are often so wilful that they will not obey even for the few years of their own youth; and the voice of living parents, and still more the sacred memory of parents that are gone, speaks to them in vain. I think this is a very important matter, brethren, and one which it concerns not a few of us, and perhaps some who are now present, to think of very seriously.

But the lesson to be drawn from the story of Jonadab the son of Rechab extends much further than this. It is not the young people only who want to be reminded that God requires us to serve Him with full devotion and obedience, and to keep His words and laws always in our hearts, without forgetting or neglecting them.

Alas! no. With the written Law of God in our hands, with the unwritten Law of God in our hearts and consciences; knowing, as we do, what He wills and commands;—which of us is there who squares his life, day by day, day and night, according to that will and

command? Does He not require of us the real and entire devotion of our hearts?—a devotion entirely compatible, indeed, with the most active life and the utmost industry in all sorts of secular duty, but still a complete devotion of the heart to Him, so that Christian men or women should all day long, day and night, feel and know themselves to be in Christ, feel and know themselves to be under the eye and within the influence of the Most Holy Spirit of God, and walk according to that knowledge, as dutifully and happily as the Rechabites obeyed, with ready cheerfulness, the one command of *their* father?

Some, I feel well assured—some among us do endeavour, by God's grace, to keep up that devotion of their hearts before God. I am sure that there are among us many (I hope) real servants of God, trying to walk before Him in more and more earnest obedience and real devotion. But the best, I am equally sure, know very well that their obedience is very imperfect, that their hearts are often tempted to forget, and that their consciences tell them that they are still far away from that which they ought to be. Oh, let such, if there be those here who feel themselves to be such, be encouraged to persevere in their good way, watching the more, praying the more, struggling the more. They will grow more than they know of or can think.

Even in the midst of their discouragement at their own conscious want of growth, they are growing (provided always that they are still watching, praying, repenting)—they are growing, I can confidently assure them, more by far than they are likely to believe. God loves those who thus watch and pray. His Holy Spirit knows every wish and longing of their hearts, and He sanctifies them more and more as they strive and long after His more complete sanctification.

But is it so with all? Is it so with many? Oh, brethren, ask your own hearts! ask them in simplicity and honesty. Is your heart, brother—is it, indeed, all day and every day, with God? He is near you, with you, in you. Are you living continually according to that Presence? Are you remembering Him always?—acting, speaking, thinking, like one who remembers Him always? When you are in company and when you are alone, in the dark and in the light, in the night and in the day, the same God Who created you, and gave you all the good things which you enjoy in life; the same God Who gave His Only Begotten Son to die for your sins upon the Cross, and Who sent His Holy Spirit to be continually with you as your Guide and Comforter;—that same God has His eye of mercy and love upon you, trying to win you to come back to Him and serve Him faithfully before you die, trying

by every gracious means, except that of actually forcing you, to lead you to love Him Who first loved you, and to serve Him Who has every right to your best service.

The eye of an earthly father, so long as it is on you, checks your wilful sin—for love, if not for fear. The eye of an earthly master, so long as you know that it is on you, keeps you from disobedience—for fear, if not for love. How much more should the Eye of God, which is always on you, keep you from sin and disobedience, both for love and fear—love for the wonderful love and mercy with which He has blessed you in Christ; and fear for the terrible judgment which He has denounced against such as live and die without real faith and true repentance?

Believe me, brethren, we are all apt to be much too easily satisfied with ourselves. God seems far away; He is out of the sight of our eyes. The people round about us seem content with a low standard; they easily excuse one another for things which they are inclined to do themselves. We come to think what *will do*, rather than what is the very best we can do: and go on so, time after time; drawing nearer to the day when all these earthly mists shall be cleared away round us, and we shall see ourselves as God sees us, and as we really are.

Oh, brethren, there is no cheat which we put upon ourselves half so mistaken or mischievous as that of always thinking *what will do,* instead of what is the very best we can do! You know it in common life. The workman who is satisfied to do his work, especially all that part of it which does not meet the eye of a superficial observer, in such a way as *will do*—do for the present at least, and perhaps last, instead of giving the best material and the best workmanship he can to every part alike,—what is his work worth? Does it not fail you just at the stress of need, just when the moment of severe trial comes? The servant whose object is to do just so much, and in just such a way as *will do,* —are you satisfied with him? Does your work prosper, do your interests flourish, in his hands? The man of any other occupation, be he farmer, or lawyer, or medical man, or clergyman, or whatever else, who aims at what *will do*—do in the eyes of man, do for the present, escape censure,—will his work be well done? will he, for his work's sake, be a faithful man in his calling? Must he not, if he is to be real, set his standard at the highest? Must he not, if he wishes even for human praise and worldly success, throw himself into his work with all his heart, without reserve of laziness or of slight difficulties, resolved not to spare any pains nor skill he has in doing it as well as possible?

And oh, brethren, do you think that less than this will do in the matter of our service—our service of heart, our service of body, soul, and spirit—to the Most High God?

Oh no; He demands us all—our best, our all. In our various callings, our hearty and real work; because it is all, of whatever sort it be, addressed really to God, and not to man.

And our secret hearts anchored in safe and holy trust on Him. There is the only secret of real devotion, the only deep and unfailing rule of real service. Our hearts holding fast to God in Christ: and in their own secret depths faithfully, humbly, cheerfully, penitently, open before Him, and drinking of the living waters of His Presence.

The Transfiguration; Death and Glory

St. Matthew xvii.

1. *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,*
2. *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

THERE is hardly a more mysterious passage in the whole of the Gospels than the account of the Lord's Transfiguration. It is told three times: by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke; by the two first with a very close likeness of expression, and by the third in slightly different terms, and with one or two small additional particulars.

It is very shortly told by all three; and, once told, it is not commented upon, explained, or alluded to again. Indeed, except the reference made to it by St. Peter in his Second Epistle, where he speaks of the Voice from Heaven which he himself heard when he was with Him in the holy mount, I am not aware of its being alluded to in any other passage or phrase of Holy Scripture whatever.

Putting aside the hasty and perhaps inconsiderate words of St. Peter, when, "not knowing what he said," he proposed to put up three tents—a suggestion which the Lord passed by without notice—we may comprise the remainder of the narrative in very few words.

The Lord went up the holy mount, perhaps Mount Tabor, to pray. He took with Him the three most favoured and nearest of the Apostles—Peter, James the Greater, and John, alone. He was transfigured before them, His Face shining as the sun, the fashion of His countenance altered, His garments white as the light, glistening, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Moses and Elijah appeared "in glory," with their bodies bright, no doubt, and glorious, like the Lord's own. They talked with Him, and the subject of their conversation was the decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. A bright cloud came over the top of the mountain, enveloping the whole company. The three Apostles, awestruck at the coming on of the bright darkness, were still more afraid, so that they fell on their faces, when out of the cloud there came a Voice, which said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

With the dying away of the Voice, the bright cloud

passed. Jesus came and touched them as they lay prone on the earth; "and when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

Such is the short narrative, as compiled from the three Evangelists; and there is no more, except that the Lord enjoined them to tell the Vision to no man until the Son of Man should be risen again from the dead.

Mysterious as this great event is, and unrevealed the main and principal objects and significancy of it, there are yet various things capable of being said in partial explanation, which are true and valuable as far as they go. We suppose that Moses and Elijah were there, not only as the very two persons whom ancient prophecy had marked out, and whom the students of prophecy expected as likely to appear again on earth, with or before the Messiah—("Art Thou Elias? And He saith, I am not. Art Thou that Prophet? And He answered, No")—but also that they might well represent the *Law* and the *Prophets*, the two great introductory dispensations, so to call them, which prepared the way for Messiah's coming.

We may well understand, also, that the sight of His glory was given in order to strengthen and comfort the faith of the Apostles, who were shortly to witness His Passion (observe, that the same three saw "the

excellent glory," and also the extreme bitterness, so far as man saw it at all, of the Agony), and to support them under His Death. So says St. Leo, "The chief object in the Transfiguration was that the scandal of the Cross might be removed from the hearts of the Disciples; and that the humility of His voluntary Passion might not disturb their faith, since the excellence of His hidden dignity had been revealed to them."

The Voice, too, so like the Voices which twice on other occasions were heard from Heaven—once almost in the same words, at His Baptism; and again, promising the glory of His Name in the early part of the great Week of the Passion—may, perhaps, be sufficiently interpreted, according to St. Peter's reference to it, as merely the Father's witness of His Divine honour and glory.

Still, these are partial explanations only—explanations of part only of what is mysterious. And there yet remains, and will no doubt remain till all be known, the central mystery of all—the real grounds of the Lord's manifestation for a short space, and to these only, in His Divine brightness, and the wondrous meeting of Moses from his grave in his anticipated glory, and Elijah from Heaven whither he had ascended without death, to talk with their Lord on Tabor, of

the "departure," the bitter Cross, which He was about to *fulfil* (to accomplish for the fulfilment of two thousand years of promise and prophecy) in that doomed City which had killed the Prophets, and was now on the point of filling up the measure of its guilt by killing the Lord of the Prophets.

What would we not give to know the particulars of that wonderful conversation? What a flood of Divine light would be poured upon the sacred doctrine of the Atoning Death of Jesus, and the preparations of it in sacrifice, type, and prophecy, if, as the three Apostles were permitted to be present, and to know the general topic of the conversation, so they had heard; or (if they did hear), had been allowed to record the holy words which passed! On this point, however, they have preserved the profoundest silence, which we have no means of breaking. Only I would observe that what these Apostles taught on the subject of the Death of Christ and its efficacy (and no writers of the New Testament dwell more, or more constantly, upon it than St. John and St. Peter) may well be thought to be not devoid of the actual authority, not only of the inspiring Spirit, but of the words of the Lord Himself, and Moses and Elijah summoned from the grave and Heaven to converse upon it.

Among the secondary topics, however, which are

suggested by the Transfiguration of the Lord is one which is of universal interest, and which seems to derive a certain amount of illustration from the narrative. There met on Tabor, as I just said, the Lord of Glory, about to die, but now seen for a while in the brightness of His heavenly Body; Moses, who had died in the flesh fifteen hundred years before, but whose flesh, having long since seen corruption, was now raised incorruptible to meet his Lord for a while—whether to return to the grave and wait the general Resurrection, or to retain its anticipated immortality, we know not; and Elijah, who had been removed from earth without dying, having been carried up to Heaven in the flesh, and there, no doubt, having undergone, without the separation of body and soul, that change which fitted him for the heavenly life—the change from mortal and corruptible to immortality and incorruption.

No doubt we may draw, and were intended to draw, inferences from hence with respect to ourselves; and to conclude how it will be with ourselves if we be with Christ to the end, and what is the Christian doctrine on the great and deeply interesting subject of Death.

The doom of Death was, as we know, passed upon our first parents on occasion of the first great sin.

Warned beforehand—"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"—they received their sentence in the following terms when the sin was complete: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Thus sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

Yet these words need careful and correct understanding, lest we misapprehend them, and, misapprehending, lay ourselves open to attack and the suggestion of mischievous doubts. We do not mean —we cannot mean—that man was originally destined to live on for ever upon this earth; so that if Adam had not sinned, he and all the Patriarchs, and all that ever lived, should still have been with us, keeping their place eternally, without decay or change of their natural bodies.

Everything forbids such a supposition. The fact of the multiplication of man from one pair to an enormous multitude; the fact of growth in man from infancy to maturity; the fact of the necessity of food and the possession of organs; the consideration of the impossibility of younger generations ever coming to the full condition of maturity of character, if all their elders of countless generations were still not only

alive, but in an eternal vigour of strong manhood keeping the positions which they had won ages ago, and could fill better than any later born;—these and a thousand other considerations of every various kind absolutely exclude the idea that the death which was brought into the world by the sin of Adam was the mere natural end of the sojourn of man upon the earth, the mere dissolution or termination of that bodily frame which was assuredly, and from the first, destined to continue in the state in which it was formed, for a temporary duration only.

No; surely the death which Adam brought upon himself and his posterity was something very different from the mere peaceful wearing out of a machine. It was death made penal, death made shocking to the natural sense, death involving that "*return to the dust*" of which the first sentence of condemnation speaks, death leading to that separation of body and soul which the natural man startles at, in which "this sensible warm motion" should "become a kneaded clod," and the soul go forth in darkness to meet it knows not what.

It might seem presumptuous to inquire what end of life on earth might have been designed for sinless man, if God had not given us two instances in His ancient Word, as if to inform us on the very point

in question. When Enoch, having walked with God, was not, for God took him, having been translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; and when Elijah was carried to Heaven in a chariot of fire;—we can hardly do wrong to conclude that even so it might have been with all the posterity of Adam, if the first sin had not transformed a blissful, happy migration from earth to Heaven, a bright passing away from the society of the sinless young ones to that of the sinless and perfected elders, into that penal and naturally terrible dissolution and return to the dust which reigns over all Adam's race as the consequence of his great sin.

But so it is not to be for us, unless, indeed, any of us should still be alive upon the earth when the last trumpet sounds, and be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Nor did the Holy Lord Himself choose, in taking the form of Man for our sakes, to be as Enoch or Elijah—to pass directly from the sinless state on earth to the glorified state in Heaven. No; having shared to the full our weakness and sorrow, and having been tempted like as we are in the flesh, it was His Holy Will to die also, to know the penal horror of mortal dissolution, in order that He might for us, not indeed do away with the dread necessity of dying, but show

us the way through the valley of the dark shadow of death, and teach us to see the bright light of the region that is to be reached beyond it.

And so there met on Tabor the man who never died; the Lord who conquered death by dying; and one favoured one out of the many millions who, like ourselves, die in the flesh, and through that Lord shall rise from the grave to share the immortal life to which He rose. Had it not been for Adam's sin, we might have been as Elijah. Thanks to Christ's victory over the grave, we shall be as Moses.

We shall be. Yes, if while we live this life we yield ourselves up to the obedience of Him with Whom we hope to share that victory; if we keep our souls faithful and devoted to His service, and these bodies, in which we trust to rise to glory, clean and clear of those dark sins of the flesh which more than anything else war against the soul, and threaten to sink it into hopeless ruin.

We shall be. Yes, if while we live in this life, and before our death comes, we repent with all our heart of our sins committed; if we resolutely determine to give up all reserves of sin, and give ourselves absolutely up to Christ; if we learn in prayers and Communions to draw continually nearer, with sincere and unfeigned hearts, to Him.

With this assured hope, we may meet sickness, danger, the on-coming of death, and death itself, with a lofty comfort, a faithful, ennobling cheerfulness, which, if it do not destroy its awfulness—as it cannot and ought not—will enable us to keep our souls firm, and our faith strong under its coming. No doubt we shall die, some of us, it may be—the old ones, or possibly even some of the young ones—*ever so soon;* and we must learn to face the thought, and still more to face the fact, in the only way in which it can be faced with reasonable and well-grounded comfort. If it be true, as indeed is most true, that the sting of death lies in sin, it is correspondingly true that it is only in the confidence of pardon of sin by Christ—pardon won by faith and repentance—that the sting is to be removed.

And with this assured hope, cheerful even in the deepest sorrow, we part from those dear friends whom it pleases God to take from our side, while He spares us to live awhile longer upon the earth. *We* cannot sorrow as men without hope might sorrow. So far as we feel quite assured, as very often we may, of the true Christian faith and prayers of those who are taken from us, their true habitual walking with God while they were still here, so far a deep, happy thankfulness must mingle even with the saddest sense

of our own bereavement, and we cannot but rejoice in our hearts that they are happy, and are *safe*, even though we be lonely and very wounded and sore at heart.

Think seriously of this, my brethren. You are sometimes called to bear very bitter sorrows of this sort. I trust that you have learned—I do not doubt that you have learned—to apply the true comfort to such sorrows, and to draw from them the very deep sweetness which, in the case of true Christian friends, there really is to be found in them. But think still more of yourselves. If you should die, and your dearest friends should be called to follow you to the grave, think whether they would find comfort, think whether they would have any right to find comfort in such remembrances about you—whether they could say, while their hearts were filled with grief, "Well, after all, so good he was, so unselfish, so full of prayers and faith, so fond of all good things, and so clear of all sin and folly, that we must be comforted; sad as it is to us, surely it is great gain to him!" I say that thoughts like these may be very useful to you, and may help you to reflect on that inevitable death that is before you, and of the way in which you are preparing for it. And remember that the judgment of friends is *very superficial*, as it is *very friendly*.

You know much more of your secret hearts and the thoughts that you allow to harbour there than they can know, or perhaps are at all likely to suspect. Death must be made happy and cheerful, not by the kind opinion of friends, but by a much deeper and more searching consciousness. Your hearts—our hearts (for I am not speaking of you more than of others, nor more of the young than of the old)—our hearts must be secretly open to God, in full confession and full devotion, if they are ever to learn the secret of meeting death with cheerfulness, or that which follows death with faithful and happy hope.

God only knoweth when that day shall come to any of us. We are all His by solemn Dedication, most of us His again by voluntary Confirmation of that Dedication. May He give us grace so to live during the rest of the time that He purposes to leave us on the earth, as that we may pass through that awful dissolution of soul and body that awaits us, so Christianly—that is, with such penitence and faith—as to share the glory of the Transfigured Lord in bodies immortal, incorruptible, clear of all the weaknesses, and shames, and frailties, and pains, which surround us now in this our life of trial and preparation.

Welcome to Everlasting Habitations

St. Luke xvi.

9. *And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

YOU will remember, I have no doubt, the passage of Holy Scripture from which this verse is taken. It is the Parable of the Unjust Steward, written only in the Gospel of St. Luke, and to be read in his sixteenth chapter.

You will remember how the unjust, or dishonest, steward, having been, no doubt, long guilty of dishonesty and wastefulness in his office, at last was found out; and, being summoned before his master to give account of his misconduct, was informed that he was to be discharged.

However, he was not discharged on the moment, but received, as we may suppose, a certain notice that, after a short time—perhaps a time not actually fixed, but quite certainly coming—he was to be no

longer steward. This short space, or breathing-time, as it were, gave him leisure to cast about, and consider what was to be done when the fatal time of the actual discharge arrived.

What was he to do? He was not strong enough, besides that he had had no practice in actual labour in the fields. It seemed a dreadful downfall for one who had been his master's agent and steward, and so had been looked up to almost as much as his master, to turn beggar and throw himself upon the charity of the tenants whom he had superintended before.

So, in his perplexity, he came to a conclusion. One crowning act of dishonesty more, and he would put the tenants under such an obligation to him that, when he was turned out, they would be glad to receive him, not as a matter of charity, but of gratitude, into their houses.

So he summoned the tenants, and, addressing himself to one who rented oliveyards of his master, and paid his rent in part of the produce, he asked him what his regular rent was. And he said, "An hundred measures of oil." And he said unto him, "Take thy bill—thy lease. I am still steward. Thou shalt have it for fifty per cent. less than its value. Instead of an hundred, write fifty; and if ever I am in trouble,

remember the good turn I did for you when I could." Then said he to another, "And how much art thou bound to pay?" And he answered, "An hundred measures of wheat." And he said unto him, "Take thy bill, or agreement. I am steward still. Thou shalt have it for fourscore."

When the whole case came, as no doubt it soon came, to the lord's ears, he could not help being struck with the foresight and ingenious providence of his dishonest servant. "The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely." Very dishonestly, no doubt, and very shamefully, and the lord assuredly did not commend him for *that;* but he did acknowledge and (saving its dishonesty) he did commend the wisdom he had shown in providing himself betimes with an asylum against the day of his discharge. It was a worldly foresight, and the children of this world are wont to be wiser in such foresight than the children of light.

Thus much for this well-known parable, which, I suppose, no person can misunderstand, so far as to think that it in any degree authorizes or praises acts of dishonesty.

We are more concerned with the lesson which the Lord, in the next verse, proceeds to draw from it. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of

the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." There can be no doubt about the general meaning of this lesson. We are all about to be put out of our stewardships. Having been entrusted by God for a time with various good things upon the earth, the time is drawing near when we are to be deprived of these things. We are to die; some of us ever so soon, some perhaps after several years, but all before long. It is perfectly certain that we must all be put out of the various stewardships which God has entrusted us with in this world.

Now, the special good thing of which the Lord is speaking in this place is *money*, which He calls by that very significant name, "the mammon of unrighteousness." "Mammon" seems to be an ancient Syriac word, personifying "money," and it is called "the mammon of unrighteousness," because money is so extremely dangerous a thing, and one that both in the getting and the spending so continually leads to all manner of sin; so that, whether to the poor who wish for it and try to get it, or to the rich who have it and spend it, it is the fruitful source of all sorts of terrible mischief and unrighteousness.

However, the Lord here shows us how we may turn this very dangerous thing into a great means

of blessing and benefit to us. He seems to say to us, "You, My disciples, are trusted by Me with a very dangerous thing—money. It is a thing which in various ways ruins the souls and loses the salvation of thousands. Yet it need not do harm. There is a way by which you may turn it to very great good. It is lent to you for a little while. You are stewards of it, some of more and some of less, but all stewards of it in some degree; and you will certainly before long be deprived of your stewardship, and then it will be all taken away from you. You cannot take a penny with you when you die, and you must die before long, and perhaps will die ever so soon. What, then, is the way of preventing this unrighteous mammon from doing harm, and turning it into the means of good? Do something like what the unjust steward did. Imitate, not his dishonesty, but his foresight. *Make friends with it.* While you have it, before you are deprived of the stewardship of it, *make friends with it.*"

Now, there can be little doubt what our Lord means by this. The *friends* whom we may make by using money well are many. First, no doubt, God, Who gave it to us, and watches how we use it, and Who, according to several of the Lord's lessons in parables, will reward us according to the full

Christian use we make of it. And next, good Angels. They who are not, as we are, in a state of probation, have treasure not lent to them for a while, but their own; and they look with anxious and, no doubt, sorrowful eyes sometimes to see the way in which we bestow our Master's goods, and wonder that, by unfaithfulness in the unrighteous mammon which is not our own, we should risk the loss of that which is to be really our own in the next life—the only true and real riches.

But I apprehend that the "friends" who are more immediately meant by our Lord in this place, are men and women like ourselves. The friends whom the unjust steward made were the tenants of his lord; and those who answer to the tenants in the parable are all the people round about us here in the world, in our parishes, in our neighbourhoods, in any relation to us—all those upon whom we can expend our money, to relieve their needs of all kinds, to educate their children, to help them in sickness, to minister to their bodily wants, to furnish them with spiritual instruction, to do all manner of kindnesses to them which can directly or indirectly be obtained by means of money. These we are to make our friends—real, good Christian friends; not sham or untrue friends, such as people sometimes are, seeming

to be friends without really being so, outside friends or companions in evil, or hollow friends for any sort of indirect reason; but true Christian friends, who will be the better for our good deeds to them, and will do us good in return by giving us their good will and praying for us. These we must win every way we can; laying out our money—our mammon of unrighteousness—in all sorts of ways; *buying them up*, so to speak—getting as great a store as we possibly can of them.

Now, one word, brethren, on this point. There are, believe me, very great opportunities for making such friends all round us. No doubt, those who are richest and have most money at their command have more of such opportunities than poorer people; yet pray observe that in pretty exact proportion to the wider diffusion and greater magnitude of a rich man's gifts is the necessary distance at which he is from the actual recipients of them. It is not the richest man who comes into closest contact with the people to whom he does good. On the contrary, many a little gift wins more Christian love by the close nearness and precious sympathy with which it is given than others of many times its amount. There is a great balance in these things, and we are hardly so differently furnished with the means of "making friends,"

even with the mammon of unrighteousness, as we may seem. Anyway, I imagine that we might all of us make many more friends than we do, if, keeping this thought in our mind, we were bent on winning the true Christian love of as many as we possibly could by all kinds of Christian giving during our short stewardship. But, remember, it is the true Christian love that is to be won, not the worldly love; and it is to be won, not by easy, good-natured, soft-hearted giving, but by the wisest Christian giving; so that, I suppose, it may possibly happen sometimes that the truest and holiest Christian gifts may be such as the person receiving them hardly yet feels gratitude for, nor knows yet in what a true Christian way he has been treated.

However, the Lord in the parable, bidding us make friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, does not mean us to be content with such an amount of friendship and gratitude as they will feel for us during this short time of stewardship, while they are, like us, very blind, and do not know what is really most for their good. He bids us look on to the days when the stewardship will be over, and then expect the return of love. And here He opens a picture to us, which it has been my chief object, in suggesting this parable to your thoughts this morning, to bring before your

minds—"that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

There seems to me to be something inexpressibly touching and tender in the thought of the welcome that awaits us in the next world—the blessed, bright, unfailing welcome on the part of all those whom we have done good to, as soon as ever this short life is over, and our present stewardship is at an end. No sooner is the scene of our death-bed done, and the soul set free from the weak and suffering body, than—even while the weeping friends are standing or kneeling round, and wondering at the look of peace which so constantly takes the place of the long distress of the last days—the soul is receiving the cordial, bright, unspeakably blessed welcoming of those to whom it has done Christian good while they were on the earth.

The text has led us to speak of this welcoming only in respect of gifts—money-gifts, the using of the mammon of unrighteousness during our short stewardship; but now that we have opened the thought, we need not confine it to these comparatively narrow limits, but think more freely of that blessed welcome which is before us, if we ourselves be not found unworthy at the last. Parents, friends, brethren, children, who have gone before us; those who have loved us and been loved by us with sacred Christian love

(they will be all as like to what they were on earth as the Lord on the Holy Mount of Transfiguration was to the Lord companying with His disciples during His ordinary three years' sojourn among them); those whom we have taught, or warned, or helped; those whom we have comforted in sorrow or poverty, or encouraged in goodness, or checked when they were tempted to give way to sin; those whom we have visited and helped to keep up in faith and hope when their hearts were in danger of sinking down and giving up God and Heaven; more by far than we can know of or think of (for, I can tell you, a good man's influence and example extends further and does more wide good than he can imagine, and in places and corners of which he has not the very remotest idea);—all these will be hailing with unspeakable welcome the arrival of another happy soul, and one to whom they owe so much. Moreover, then they will know for certain how much they owe. For now good deeds are not always rightly appreciated, and much that is really helpful to other people's good and salvation is unkindly received on earth, or in some way or other mistaken and misapprehended. But there will be no mistake *then*. They will then know quite well, and recognize with the deep gratitude of the blessed, the good man or the good woman, the kind, loving

Christian soul who, in the dimness of the world, in the midst of a sinful generation, gave them gifts, or did deeds, or spoke words, or, by some of the innumerable ways by which people who are in earnest may do Christian good to their brethren, helped them on to win in Christ their precious, assured, and everlasting safety.

It is surely not wrong, brethren, to picture to ourselves this blessed welcome. Can you not imagine how the newly-released soul of a good man or a good woman may fail to recognize, in the bright thronging spirits which hail their coming, the poor bent old man, the suffering yet cheerful and faithful old woman, whom they parted with in pain and poverty on the earth? May we not innocently fancy how many a bright, happy soul might come and offer them the warmest and most loving welcome, and say, "No doubt you have forgotten me: I am very different from what I was when you knew me; but I remember *you*, and now I know how much I owe, under God, of my present happiness to kind words and loving deeds of yours, some of which I took offence at then, and which you thought little of"? Can we not picture to ourselves the unspeakable happiness of thus recognizing them? "Are you indeed the poor boy that died, whom I remember so well; the afflicted old

man whom we prayed for in church so long; the mother whose loss we mourned for so long and bitterly?" Brethren, the picture is an innocent one, I believe; a very sweet one, I am sure. I cannot trust myself with it further. I am glad to have suggested it to your own thought.

There, we know, are *many mansions*—everlasting habitations, tabernacles, or tents, not of this building. In them they dwell who have died in Christ before us. There they are ready to welcome us when we die. There, with God, and among the good Angels (who delight in their joy, and are helping *us* now as in their day they helped *them*), they wait for the release of those for whom their former love and gratitude are now multiplied an hundredfold, by having become altogether heavenly. Yes, brethren, so it is; they are hopefully, perhaps anxiously, waiting for us now, while we, still engaged in this work-day world, are passing the few remaining days of our stewardship, making, if it may be, more friends against the day when we too shall be put forth from it.

Then let us take with us the thought of the friends we have to make. There is an immense deal to do, and a great abundance of opportunities of making friends for another world. Look round, and think what an enormous abundance of opportunities God

has furnished to each one of us, if we will take advantage of them. Ignorance, sin, poverty, suffering, —alas! we have these with us always, in all shapes, and in appalling magnitude; people near us and people far off from us; friends to make at home, in our own families many, in our parishes and neighbourhoods, and all round us, even to distant lands.

And no friends to be made at all, unless we make friends first with God and our own consciences; for let no man nor woman think that there can be friendship or welcome in Heaven, but for those who have made their own peace with God by true and deep repentance of their own sins.

And little time enough to do it in. Months and years run away, and we are apt to use high words and utter lofty sentiments enough, but our doings lag painfully behind our words, and the end comes on apace.

Then, Christian brethren, let us gird ourselves up to our Christian work of "*making friends*"—making true, eternal friends, by every means in our power of station, influence, example, prayer, sympathy, love; and let us cheer ourselves with the thought of that inexpressible *welcome*, if we be faithful and penitent ourselves, in the everlasting habitations of those who are safe in Christ for ever and ever.

The Question of the Sadducees

St. Matthew xxii.

23. *The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,*
24. *Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.*

IN pursuance of the joint design in which both Pharisees and Sadducees took part, no sooner were the Pharisees answered in respect of the insidious and dangerous question of the tribute money, than the Sadducees came, on the very same day, with their question. You remember, no doubt, what it was—how one woman married seven brothers in succession without children, and how they supposed a difficulty would arise, if there were a Resurrection, to determine whose wife she should be of the seven. It was a very foolish and, so to say, childish question, showing the most complete ignorance of the very nature of the belief in the next world, as held even by their own countrymen. It was a very much less

skilful, though, no doubt, intended to be quite as insidious a question as that of the Pharisees.

But the answer given to it by the Lord is of the deepest importance. In answering the former question, He gave a practical answer to a practical enquiry, and gave it in such a manner as to lay down the principles which should govern the conduct of Christian men in all like cases; but in answering the present question, He laid open depths of Holy Scripture, and a revelation—I know not whether it is to be found elsewhere in the Bible—respecting the Resurrection of the dead, of the profoundest interest and importance.

He listened without impatience to the childish tale which the Sadducees told, and, when they held their peace, having put before Him, as they thought, a difficulty which could not be surmounted, He replied, "Ye do err; ye are wrong and mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. Ye are wrong twice over. Ye limit most injuriously and mistakenly the power of God. For in the Resurrection there is no such thing as marriage. There is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage. They who rise in Christ shall be as the Angels of God." They shall be as the Angels of God! I know not precisely what this means. I cannot venture to say with any exactness, for it is not elsewhere referred to in Holy

Scripture, what the nature of the holy Angels is in this respect—whether they be merely and altogether spirits, without any material bodies at all, or whether they have some corporeal and bodily being of a glorified and heavenly kind. But, as to all such questions as that raised by the Sadducees, marriage and giving in marriage are altogether things which belong to this earth. They do not exist beyond the grave. Love, affection, tenderness—all that especial and supreme tenderness which belongs to pure and faithful wedded love—that, no doubt, will last beyond the grave, and will sweeten even the sweetness of the life that follows it. And parental tenderness, and filial love, and the love of brothers and sisters, and the love of dear friends,—all this will, no doubt, outlast the earth, and not desert the faithful ones who rise in Christ to immortal life. But they will rise as the Angels. Marriage and the things of marriage in that holy place are wholly unknown. They shall be as the Angels of God, who are surely quite unlike us in all such ways, undistinguished in sex, knowing neither age nor decay, holy, pure, happy, blessed with the perpetual vision of the Most High, in Whose light they live. Most injuriously, then, and most mistakenly do those err who, thinking only of the state of things on this side of the grave, would limit

the power of God, and take it for granted that He cannot change them in the other world. But He will change them. As the sorrows, and pains, and dangers, and distresses of the earth will then be at an end, so will also some of the other conditions of our earthly life; and specially and eminently this—that there is there no such thing as marriage or giving in marriage, but that we shall be even as the Angels of God.

But the richness of our Lord's answer to these foolish Sadducees does not stop short even at this great and precious truth and revelation. He goes on to say that they are wrong again, because they do not properly understand the Holy Scriptures—even the Books of Moses, which alone, in their captious criticism, they allowed to be Divine. Did they never read that which was spoken unto them by God, when, at the bush on Horeb, He said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? For "He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him."

Now, this quotation, thus made by the Lord Himself from the Old Testament, requires very particular consideration on several grounds.

In the first place, observe how it shows us that there is a great deal more depth of meaning in Holy Scripture than we of ourselves should be able to

find in it. When God said at the bush, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," we could not have argued from those words that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive. They might have meant, "I am the God Who protected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *when they were alive;*" and we should have had no warrant, in interpreting them, to put any further or deeper meaning upon them. But when the Lord Himself, Whose is the Holy Spirit which guided the pen of the writers of the Bible, comes to interpret these words, see what a wonderfully greater depth and richness of meaning they are seen to have than we could have found in them! Interpreted by Him, they tell us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive. They signify that, when, speaking to Moses at the bush, He called Himself by this Name, He really said, "I am the God Who, even at this time, though Abraham has been nearly four hundred years dead to this earth, and buried, and out of sight, am his God. Even now, at this time, though the Patriarchs have been so long taken away from you, they are under My protection and care. I am their God. I watch over them. I take care of them. They are precious in My sight and presence, as much as ever they were in their lives; nay, more so, for they are now out of the

danger of any further falling away from Me. I am the God at this very time—the faithful, loving, guarding God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." God *is* not the God of dead people. If they were really dead and gone—gone altogether, and existing no more, God could not be said *to be* their God. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him. All that ever lived upon the earth, though they be no more seen of men, and are to all human sight gone and no more—all, without exception, live unto Him, are alive in His sight. "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him."

Now, as I said, the first thing which I wish you to observe on these words is the depth which our Lord shows us that there is in Holy Scripture. Judging from the way in which He expounds this verse, we may well believe that in all the Scripture there is a deep, more or less hidden meaning, which our hasty reading and common powers of explanation do not reach to. The mind of the Spirit is much deeper than the superficial sound of the outward words. And we may well think that all that deeper sense is not so absolutely hidden but that to very earnest and saintly readers of Holy Scripture it may be given to penetrate further than the mere letter,

and to drink in, to their soul's great comfort and support, deeper draughts of Divine communication from the words of Holy Scripture than the actual letter would lead the less advanced and perfected Christian to discover in them.

But, when we consider further that which our Lord opens to us as really contained in these words of the Book of Exodus, what an astonishing and wonderful revelation they are seen to unfold! He lifts up, as it were, the curtain of the invisible world, and shows us the whole multitude of His Saints of former ages—Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles; yes, and the countless number of His people, whose names and doings have been forgotten upon the earth—gathered in His sacred Paradise of peace and rest, under the loving care and protection of their God and Father. He shows us that, though they are gone—some of them thousands of years ago—from their places on earth, so that we know them no more, or know them only by the dim light of history, yet that they, one and all, are alive in His Presence, as much alive and as much protected and blessed as when they walked for a few years in the body upon the earth, and served Him in their generation, in their respective callings and countries. Is it not a most striking and a most elevating thought, as we walk through our church-

yards, and see the hardly legible inscriptions on the ancient and decaying gravestones, yes, and the barrows and mounds upon our downs, which covered the bones—till they actually mingled with the dust from which they were taken—of ancient Britons, whose existence is only so testified to us; and think of the multitudes whom the sea has covered, whom battle and shipwreck, the hurricane and the tornado, have swept into its depths; that there, in that peaceful place, they all are, as many as have died in Christ, waiting—waiting till the number of the elect be completed, waiting for us and for our children, as many as shall be born and die in Christ, and be with Him received into the Paradise of God? God is their God still; and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for to Him all live.

God be praised that, out of the miserable question of these miserable Sadducees, He has been pleased to draw such wonderful comfort and blessing to our hearts; that, instead of merely rebuking their wicked and self-complacent folly, He turned it to such precious account for our perpetual instruction and support. There is no thought more comforting, nor any which lifts our souls higher, in the midst of the troubles and distresses of the world, than that of the souls of the righteous, the innumerable souls of the righteous in

Christ, who are, even at this very moment at which we speak, alive with Him in Paradise.

We know but little of their joy; but we know that it is greater than eye of man hath seen on earth, or ear heard, or his heart conceived.

We do not know how far they are acquainted with the things that go on upon the earth, and the fortunes of those whom they have loved on earth and left behind. We do not know that they do know them, and assuredly we do not know that they do not know them. It is a merciful uncertainty. For while we have a reasonable ground of peaceful comfort and sympathy in hoping that they may know of all that is good and happy and faithful among us, the certainty that they knew all, and knew it with that clear and unmistaken judgment that must belong to the next world, would sometimes be almost enough to break our heart, in the consciousness of sin and downfall in ourselves or others whom they have loved. It is, as I said, a merciful uncertainty; but in that uncertainty I cannot but hope and think, from such slight indications as Holy Scripture gives us, that the spirits of the departed in Christ do know much at least of what is good, and holy, and loving, and faithful upon the earth.

Before long, no doubt, we shall join them. While

others are passing from the earth every day—now by the ordinary effects of sickness or old age, now by the sudden sweep of hurricane or pestilence—we shall, ere long, be called too; perhaps, as it may please God, by gradual decay; perhaps by ever so sudden and unexpected a call in the very midst of active life.

Does it not sweeten and soften the naturally terrible thought of dissolution and death to remember, if we be in Christ, the bright country, the inexpressible joy, the countless multitudes of the Saints of God, who are ready to give us welcome in that happy place? Does it not gild even the darkness of the grave, to remember that, even as the body dies, the soul is freed to be with Christ, and with the good who are gone before? Is the cavern so dark, when we see the glorious light that streams into it at the end? Is the very scene of earthly sickness and death, sad and woeful as it is, only sad and woeful, when we remember that it is only the entrance—the short entrance, to peace and joy and happiness unspeakable?

Brethren, the topic I am speaking of is one on which I love to dwell. It seems to be one which is fit, not only for times of actual sorrow, but for all times. It lifts up one's heart in the Lord. It helps us to see this world as it is. It helps us not to over-

estimate either its outward joys or its outward sorrows; for its joys are as nothing compared with the joys that are to come; and as to our sorrows, great and real as they sometimes are, remember how St. Paul speaks: "For our light affliction," he says, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." A man or woman who thinks often and much about the souls that are in Paradise is hardly likely to be much out of the road of joining them there when he dies.

But, brethren, of all things do not let us forget that, in order to come to that blessed Paradise then, we must be good Christians now. We *must* repent of our sins and forsake them. We *must* turn to God in true faith and devotion, while we live upon the earth. We must be holy now, if we desire to be happy then.

For, alas! there is another place of departed souls, besides Paradise, into which the wicked shall be turned, and they that forget God while they live here—the place of Judas, the place of the rebel angels, the place of impenitent sinners.

May God deliver us from this; and, by His Holy

Spirit, so turn our hearts in time that we too, every one of us, may, in Christ, be welcomed to that blessed company which no man can number, who, having lived with God on the earth, are now alive with Him in Paradise. For "He is not a God of the dead, but a God of the living; for all live unto Him."

THE END.

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